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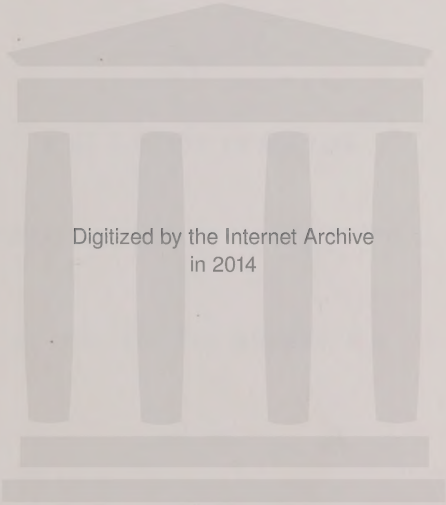
The works of Bishop Sherlock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THE WORKS

OF

BISHOP SHERLOCK.

WITH

SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE,

SUMMARY OF EACH DISCOURSE, NOTES, &c.

BY THE REV. T. S. HUGHES, B. D.

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DISCOURSES.

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE LI.

TITUS, CHAP. II.—VERSE 14.

THE expression here used, *Who gave himself for us*, is so familiar to the ears of Christians, and its reference to the death of our Saviour is so well known, that there is no need to illustrate it by parallel passages. The expressions in 1 Tim. ii. 61. and Gal. i. 4. are somewhat fuller, but their import is the same. This doctrine of the gospel, viz. man's salvation purchased by Christ's death, is that great mystery hid from ages, but now manifested by the preaching of the Apostles and Prophets. Yet, though it be *made known* and *manifest* to us, that we may not suppose ourselves intitled to call for the reasons on which it is founded, it is necessary to observe that the gospel is a revelation of the will and purpose of God: the reasons of his so acting are not revealed to us, nor have we authority to say they ever will be. Under the law, God's purpose to save mankind is intimated; under the gospel it is proclaimed to all the world; but neither of them instructs us in the reasons of this proceeding: but having life and immortality set before us in God's own way, we are left to embrace them through faith. The gospel then being offered as a matter of faith,

confirmed by signs and wonders as security for its promises, he acts without commission, who proposes it as a matter of science and knowlege, and as the result of mere reason, or who pretends to account for the inscrutable methods of God's wisdom. To a person inquiring why God required such a sacrifice for sins, when he might have forgiven them, we may answer, God has not admitted us to his secret counsels, or openly declared them. We preach Christ's death, a sacrifice for sin, himself the resurrection and the life, and the judge of the world: if you ask for our evidence, we answer with St. Peter, *To him give all the prophets witness*, &c. (Acts x. 43.), with our Saviour (John x. 25.), with St. Paul (Acts xvii. 31.) On this evidence the faith of the gospel stands; the Christian's hope rests not on curious speculations, but on this, *that all the promises of God in Christ are yea, and amen*, that is, sure, certain, and irrevocable. The death of Christ, according to the Scripture, was ordained before the foundation of the world; and since, through faith in his death, God intended to offer salvation to the world, it is reasonable to suppose that the sacrifices before and under the law were introduced in order to prepare and dispose men to receive the tender of God's mercies, in virtue of the one sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the whole world. Sacrifices in the heathen world, though corrupt, and applied to corrupt purposes, yet appear in the religious worship of the best men in the earliest times, and were established in the church of God's own founding among the Israelites. Had they originally been matter of superstition or human invention, though we may suppose God's gracious acceptance of the free-will offering of a weak mind, yet we cannot suppose that he would adopt the superstition, and make it a necessary part of a religion of his own establishment. To avoid this absurdity, it must be said that the use of sacrifices was divinely introduced for the atonement of sins; if so, they had such virtue as God thought fit to annex to the perform-

ance, in consequence of the promise which attended them; if they came in any other way, we cannot imagine any virtue in them. Now since we are taught that the sacrifice of Christ is the only true expiatory one for the sins of the world, it is manifest that all other sacrifices, accepted by God, owed their efficacy to the relation which they bore to this one sacrifice, and as signs and figures of better things to come. By this reasoning it may be shown that the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice is not confined to any particular age or time, &c. This sacrifice conveys to us the charter of God's pardon, together with the certain hope of immortal glory: we are no longer our own, that we should obey the lusts of the flesh; but his, who hath purchased us with his blood, to be heirs with him, &c. These are great hopes, but they rest on a foundation which is agreeable to reason. All religion ultimately resolves itself into a trust and faith in God: men are not apt to refer those conclusions which are deducible from natural reason to the head of faith, though sometimes they have no other support. As in the common affairs of life, we trust men from our knowlege of their characters and qualities, so natural religion, reasoning from the character and attributes of God, doubts not but that he will deal reasonably with the children of men: and what is this but faith and trust in God? Beyond this natural religion cannot go, so as to particularise and say what God will do in any case: to determine this, we must be wise as God, so as to say what is the best thing for infinite wisdom to do; for though we may depend on him for future happiness, if we do well, yet nature presents us with great difficulties: this point enlarged on. This faith of natural religion is the basis of gospel faith; for as reason teaches us to depend on God's wisdom, justice, and goodness, it teaches us also to depend on his veracity; and therefore it is as rational an act of faith, to believe that God will save the world according to the method which he has declared, as to rely on his goodness to do the thing, without

being able to assign the method in which it shall be done: this point enlarged on. The difference lies not in the nature of faith in one case and in the other, but in the extent of our knowlege in each case. In natural religion, the belief that God will save us, implies that some means will be used for our salvation; under the gospel these means are ascertained, and therefore the faith of a Christian embraces the means as well as the end of this hope. In things which are within our power to do, or to conceive, we can judge of the fitness or unfitness of the means made use of to do them; but in things beyond our power and conceptions, we have not this judgment. This point beautifully illustrated by examples drawn from the animal and vegetable kingdoms. The application of these examples to our resurrection; in which natural religion throws itself on the unlimited power of God, thereby owning itself no judge of the means for effecting this great work: these the gospel has opened to us: we complain that we see not the natural tendency of them to the end proposed, forgetting that the work itself is mysterious, and therefore that the means must be so too. That the death of Christ should be the life of the world, is a surprising proposition; but to say that this is not a proper method, without a clear knowlege of the whole dispensation of Providence regarding man, is absurd. The New Testament discovers to us that we are the immediate workmanship of the Son of God, *by whom all things were made, which were made; being created by him and for him.* How far this relation between Christ and man rendered it proper that his death should be an expiation for the sins of the world, we are not informed; nor is it expedient for us to be wise above what is written: but something of this sort seems intimated in Scripture: the fall of men was the loss of so many subjects to Christ, their natural Lord under God, in virtue of his having created them: the redeeming of them was the recovering them again, the re-establishing his power over his own works: thus

St. Paul describes the work of our redemption, Col. i. 13.; and in the next verse recites the means used for our deliverance. In confirmation of this doctrine, he subjoins the relation in which Christ stands towards us as our Maker, verses 15-17. and the new relation acquired in virtue of his redemption, verse 18. As we owed to him our first life, so also we owe to him our second. The reason of this dispensation of Providence in the redemption of the gospel is related verses 19-20. The scheme of thought which runs through this passage of Scripture, seems to be this: that as Christ was head of the creation, and made all things, so at the redemption from sin he was made head of this new work also, the giver of life to every believer: for this purpose he made peace by the blood of his cross, and reconciled all things to God, that he might have the pre-eminence. This the Apostle teaches us, and also that the pre-eminence of Christ as head of the church is connected with and related to his pre-eminence as head of the creation. We have therefore reason to believe that the whole transaction of our redemption through Christ, his incarnation, his life on earth, his death on the cross, the sacrifice he offered for sin, and his glorious resurrection, are founded in the most absolute propriety, and the result of infinite wisdom, choosing the fittest means for the end desired. This then is our hope and confidence; that Christ *gave himself for us*. Let this hope live with us here, that we may live by it for ever.

DISCOURSE LI.

TITUS, CHAP. II.—VERSE 14.

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

THE expression here made use of, 'Who gave himself for us,' is so familiar to the ears of Christians, and is so well understood to relate to the death of Christ, and the offering up of himself on the cross for the sins of the whole world, that there is no need to give light to it by alleging parallel places of holy Scripture. The expression is something fuller in St. Paul's first Epistle to Timothy; 'Who gave himself a ransom for all,' ii. 6. As likewise Gal. i. 4. 'Who gave himself for our sins;' but the import and meaning of the words is one and the same.

This doctrine of the gospel, that the death of Christ was an offering made of himself for the sins of the whole world, a price paid for the purchase of mankind, that they might become 'his,' and, together with him, heirs of glory, and of a kingdom that shall never fail, is that great mystery hid from ages and generations, but now made manifest by the preaching of the Apostles and prophets of Christ Jesus.

But, that we may not mistake, and imagine that, because this mystery is said to be 'made known' and 'manifest' to us, therefore we are intitled to call for the reasons on which this wonderful administration of Providence is founded, it is necessary to observe that the gospel is a revelation of the will and purpose of God. The reasons on which he acted, when he ordained this method of salvation, are not fully revealed to us; nor have we authority to say they ever will be. Under the law we meet with many intimations of God's purpose to save mankind: under the gospel this purpose is opened and pro-

claimed to all the world: but neither under the law, nor yet under the gospel, are we instructed in the reasons of this proceeding; but having life and immortality set before us in God's own way, we are left to embrace them through faith and confidence in his promise, who is able to perform the word which is gone out of his mouth.

And since God has thought fit to offer the gospel as a matter of faith to the world, and has given his word, confirmed by signs and wonders, as a sufficient security for the performance on his part, he acts without commission, who proposes the gospel to the world as a matter of science and knowlege, and the result of mere reason, and pretends to account for the methods of God's wisdom, which are far above and out of his sight.

If you ask how it became necessary for Christ to die, or why God required a sacrifice for those sins, which he might, if he had so pleased, have freely forgiven? I know but one proper answer for a minister of the gospel to make to these inquiries, that God has not admitted him into these secret councils, nor sent him to declare them to the world.

We preach the death of Christ a sacrifice and expiation for sin, because appointed by God, who gave his Son to die for the sins of the world: we preach Christ the resurrection and the life, because God hath given him power to raise the dead: we preach Christ the judge of the world, because the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son. If you ask for our evidence, we answer with St. Peter, 'To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins:' Acts x. 43. We answer with our blessed Saviour, 'The works which he did in his Father's name, they bear witness of him:' John x. 25. We answer with St. Paul, 'That God hath given this assurance unto all men, that he will judge the world by Christ, in that he raised Jesus from the dead:' Acts xvii. 31.

On this evidence the faith of the gospel stands: the Christian's hope of salvation has no dependence on the speculations of curious inquirers, but rests on this immoveable foundation, 'that all the promises of God in Christ are yea, and amen;' that is, sure, certain, and irrevocable promises.

The death of Christ was, as the holy Scripture teaches, foreordained before the foundation of the world: and since God intended, in the fulness of time, to offer salvation to the world through faith in the sacrifice of his Son, it is reasonable to suppose that the sacrifices before and under the law were introduced and countenanced to prepare the faith of the world to receive the tender of God's mercies, in virtue of the one sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the whole world; that, being accustomed to ask pardon for iniquities by the means of sacrifices, men might be ready and disposed to receive the grace of God, when offered under like conditions.

Sacrifices in the heathen world, as all other parts of religion, were corrupted, and applied to corrupt purposes; but they appear at first in the religious worship of the best and most approved men in the earliest time, and were established as part of God's worship in the church of his own founding among the people of Israel. Had this been a mere piece of superstition and human invention in its original, however we may suppose God to accept graciously the free-will offering of a weak mind, yet it is not to be supposed that he would adopt the superstition, and make it a necessary part of a religion of his own establishment. To avoid this absurd consequence, it must be maintained that the use of sacrifice was introduced by divine precept for the atonement of sins. If sacrifices were introduced by the command of God, they had such virtue as he thought fit to annex to the performance, in consequence of the promise which attended them; but if they came in any other way, it is impossible to conceive that there was any virtue in them. And since we are taught that the sacrifice offered up by Christ is the only true expiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world, it is manifest that all other sacrifices accepted by God owed their efficacy to the relation they bore to this one sacrifice, through the appointment of him, who gave them for signs and figures of better things to come.

This reasoning on the principles of revelation taught us in the gospel, may show us that the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice is not confined to any particular age or time; that sacrifices in the ancient church of God were figures and representations of this one great sacrifice, as the Eucharist in the Christian church

is the memorial of it; and that the most material and significative part of worship among the people of God has ever been, 'the showing forth the Lord's death,' in types and figures before the coming of Christ, and in the communion of his body ever since.

This sacrifice conveys to us the charter of God's pardon, and, together with it, the certain hope of glory and immortality. We are now no longer our own, that we should obey the lusts of the flesh; but we are his, who hath purchased us with the inestimable price of his own blood; purchased us, not to be slaves, but to be his brethren, and heirs with him of the kingdom of God.

These are great hopes, and are built on our faith in the promises of God through Christ Jesus. How reasonable this foundation is, a little consideration will show. All religion ultimately resolves itself into trust and faith in God. Men are not apt to refer those conclusions to the head of faith, which they collect from their own natural reason; and yet oftentimes these conclusions have no other support. In common affairs of life, where we have long known men to act on principles of honor and virtue, we think ourselves as secure in our dealings with them, as if we pursued them in every step with bonds and obligations. This is, without doubt, trust and confidence; and yet it is a natural conclusion of our reasoning on the characters and qualities of men about us. This is the very argument on which natural religion forms all its conclusions: it reasons from the character and attributes of God, and rests itself in this conclusion, that so just and reasonable a Being will deal justly and reasonably with the children of men; and what is this but faith and trust in God? To any higher point of certainty natural religion cannot arrive: for though we may certainly conclude from the wisdom, goodness, and justice of God, that he will, in all his dealings, act wisely, mercifully, and justly; yet we cannot draw this general conclusion into particulars, and say precisely what is the very thing which God will do in any case, or by what particular method he will bring it about. To determine this we must be as wise as God; for no Being not infinitely wise can, with certainty, say what is the best thing for infinite wisdom to do; for though we learn from natural religion

to depend on God for future happiness if we do well, yet nature presents us with great difficulties: we die and moulder to dust, and in that state what we are, or where we are, nature cannot say; whether we are beings capable of enjoyment out of the body; whether we are to have the same, or other, or any bodies; what kind of happiness is prepared for us; what capacities and powers we shall be endowed with, and the like, are inquiries in which we can have no light from mere reason. What does natural religion do then under these difficulties? Why, it supports itself on this one rational conclusion, that God has power and wisdom to conduct this great affair in the best method; and to him it may be securely left. And is not this a religion of faith, which trusts God for all its dearest concerns?

This faith of natural religion is the basis and foundation of gospel faith: for as reason teaches us to depend on the attributes of God's wisdom, justice, and goodness, it teaches us also to depend on his veracity: and therefore, on God's declaring the method in which he will save the world, it is altogether as rational an act of faith to rely on the method which he has declared, as it is in natural religion to rely on his goodness to do the thing without being able to assign any method in which it shall be done: for if it be reasonable in natural religion to rely on God's goodness for the pardon of sin, is it not as reasonable, under the gospel, to rely on pardon through Jesus Christ, God having declared himself reconciled to the world through Jesus Christ? The difference lies not in the nature of faith in one case and in the other, but in the extent of our knowlege in one case and in the other. Under natural religion we see only this, that God is merciful; and therefore our trust and faith can go no farther than this, to rely on his mercy: under the gospel God has declared that he has given his only Son to die for the sins of the world; and therefore we believe that through the death of Christ we shall receive pardon and redemption. In natural religion, the general belief that God will save us, implies that some means shall be used for our salvation: under the gospel the means are ascertained; and therefore the faith of a Christian embraces the means as well as the end of this hope.

In things which are within our power to do, or to conceive,

we can judge of the fitness or unfitness of the means made use of to do them; but in things which exceed our power and our conceptions, we have not this judgment. We judge the earth to be a proper place to receive the seeds of vegetables: the seed of animals have their proper repositories also. But we judge of the propriety in these cases from experience only; we think them proper because we see they are; for we have no notion of the propriety of these means, or any clear conception of the operations of nature in one case or the other: and could these methods be proposed to one quite a stranger to the works of nature; and should he be told that the way to make ten bushels out of one, was to throw the one into the ground, and there let it lie and rot, very probably he would think the proposal exceedingly absurd. Now to give life to one dead, or to conceive how it is to be given, is the remotest thing that can be from our powers and capacities. Let the proper means therefore be what they will, they must be above our comprehension. In this article, natural religion throws itself on the unlimited power of God; which is owning itself no judge of the means for effecting this great work. The gospel has opened to us the purposes of God for effecting this work: we complain that we do not see the natural tendency of these means to the end proposed; not considering that the work itself is mysterious, and therefore the proper means to effect it must be so too.

That the death of Christ should be the life of the world, is a surprising proposition; and yet to say this is not a proper method for redeeming the world, without having a clear view of the whole dispensation of Providence with respect to mankind, is utterly absurd.

The Scriptures of the New Testament have discovered to us that we are the immediate workmanship of the Son of God, 'by whom all things were made which were made; being created by him, and for him.' How far this relation between Christ and the children of men made it proper for him to offer, and for God to accept the sacrifice of his death, as an expiation for the sins of the world, we are not directly informed, nor is it expedient for us to be wise above what is written: but something of this sort seems to be intimated in Scripture. The fall of man was the loss of so many subjects to Christ, their natural

Lord under God, in virtue of his having created them: the redeeming them was the recovering of them again, the re-establishing his power over his own works. See how St. Paul describes this work of our redemption: 'God hath delivered us from the powers of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:' Col. i. 13. In the next verse he recites the means made use of for our deliverance: 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.' For the confirmation and establishment of this doctrine of the gospel, he immediately subjoins the relation in which Christ stands towards us as our Maker, and the new relation acquired in virtue of his redemption. In the first view he styles him, 'The image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature; for by him were all things created—and by him all things consist.' In the second view he calls him, 'The head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.' As we owed to him our first life, so we owe to him our second: the reason of this dispensation of Providence in the redemption of mankind is added by the Apostle: 'For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and (having made peace by the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things to himself.' The scheme of thought which runs through this passage of Scripture seems to be this; that as Christ was head of the creation, and made all things, so when God thought fit to restore the world from sin, it pleased him that Christ should be head also of this new work, the first-born from the dead himself, and the giver of life to every believer: for this purpose he made peace by the blood of his cross, and reconciled all things to God, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. Thus much we collect from the Apostle's reasoning; and discern plainly that the pre-eminence of Christ, as head of the church, is connected and related to his pre-eminence as head of the creation. Therefore we have reason to believe that the whole transaction of our redemption through Christ, his incarnation, his life on earth, his death on the cross, the sacrifice he offered for sin, and his glorious resurrection, are founded in the most absolute propriety, and are the result of infinite wisdom, choosing the fittest means to accomplish this great work.

To go back then from whence we set out. This is our hope and confidence; that Christ 'gave himself for us.' Let this hope live with us here, that we may live by it for ever: let it ever mortify our corrupt affections on earth, and teach us to live only to him who died for us; for we are to the world, and all the lusts of it, 'dead, and our life is hid with Christ: and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.'

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE LII.

I TIMOTHY, CHAP. I.—VERSE 15.

THESE words contain the great charter of the Christian church, and are the title by which we claim all the promises of the gospel: if it be asked on what pretence the peace of God is proclaimed to men, and on what confidence pardon is offered to sinners, it is answered in the latter clause of the text; and that in his name is preached salvation, peace, and pardon to offenders. This doctrine, with the principles on which it is founded, and its natural consequences, distinguishes the Christian religion from all others. On this text are built the believer's hopes, and the advantages and favors which we claim beyond the terms of justice and natural religion. Whoever therefore rejects this article, does indeed reject the Christian religion, though not all the religion contained in the gospel, the moral duties of which are those of natural religion carried to perfection: and the man who receives not Christ for his Redeemer, may yet receive these, as being agreeable to his own reason and understanding. The difference between a true Deist and the Christian arises from the doctrine in the text. They both admit the being and providence of God, as well as the obligations of morality, and therefore the necessity of a virtuous life. Thus far the Deist cannot doubt, as his sole hope rests in his obedience to his equitable judge. Should the Christian build so far on other hopes, neglecting the weighty matters of the law, he deceives himself, and abuses the gospel of his Saviour. But the Deist reckons all men, from the very nature of their creation, capable of fulfilling the end designed

for them by God; and as he owns the duty of obeying God, he therefore claims his protection. The Christian knows that man has fallen from his primary state of innocence, and having no claim on God by his obedience, stands in need of pardon, as well as grace and assistance to perform the conditions on which pardon is offered: he believes that pardon and reconciliation has been granted to man through the sufferings of the Son of God; and that grace will be granted. All these points are briefly comprehended in the text. To illustrate and confirm this proposition, it is shown, I. what reason we have to believe that men were sinners, and stood in need of pardon and salvation: II. by what means Christ perfected their redemption and salvation.—I. It is a saying of St. Austin's, *if man had not fallen, Christ had not come:* our Lord speaks to the same sense, when he tells us, *the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost;* and again, when he answered those who reproached him for conversing with publicans and sinners, *they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.* Had man continued innocent, natural religion would have answered all the ends of his creation; he would have wanted no Redeemer; for after the works of the creation were finished, *God saw every thing that he had made; and behold it was very good*: in this state therefore no reconciler between God and man was wanted. That actions shall be rewarded or punished, natural sense and reason have always taught the considering part of mankind. The voice of reason and of the law is, *this do and thou shalt live:* for though man is altered, yet the nature of things is the same; so that the abstract consideration of virtue and vice properly infers the reward of the one and the punishment of the other; it is no wonder then that they who argue on such general views only should imagine that moral virtue may still exalt a man to the highest degree of happiness. In the question concerning the merit of good works, there has been much confusion, for want

of distinguishing between good works, considered simply and in their own nature, and as performed by the sons of men: the first is, whether virtue in its own nature is intitled to reward. Now as sure as God is just, and that good differs from evil, God will and must reward the one and punish the other. But the question, whether the good works of *men* deserve reward, alters the state of the case; since the nature of good works and of man also must be considered; for in his case you ask whether the man condemned for his evil works may be rewarded for his good works: this point exemplified in the case of a murderer, who has long after his crime led an irreproachable life. Though this instance is not absolutely parallel to our case, yet it shows that virtue and morality, naturally considered, may deserve reward, while the virtue and morality of man may not: and this is the parting point between the patrons of natural and of revealed religion; the not considering which has made some think, that whilst we defend the authority of revelation, we give up the principles of reason and nature. But, say they, does not vice essentially differ from virtue? True, it does. Is not justice the attribute of God, who must therefore reward virtue and punish vice? True, still. Is not this then a sufficient foundation for religion, without recurring to grace and faith, or miracles, or mysteries? True, it is; where native innocence is preserved, where religion is *res integra:* but with respect to those who have already offended, reason and nature declare vice must be punished: and if so, what must sinners expect? Whether such conditions should endear natural religion to sinners, let common sense judge. Were Christianity to be preached to a new race of men without stain of guilt, these doctrines would not apply to them: this point enlarged on. Should this race however fall from innocence, and be liable to the punishments of vice, then the application holds good: this point also enlarged on. Some contend that God from his mercy and goodness will forgive sinners: but if the

justice of God must reward virtue and punish vice, and yet his mercy must forgive sinners, then natural religion contradicts itself, in affirming that sin necessarily must and must not be punished: if it be said, it is probable God, pitying our weakness, will be lenient with us, so say we too; but probability infers not necessity; therefore it must depend on his will whether he will do it or no: all hopes therefore must be resolved into the evidence of free grace, which is no other than revelation. Would you then disprove revelation, and discard the religion of Christ? You must prove mankind to be in a state of innocence and purity; and then it will be senseless to talk of redemption: for what should innocence be redeemed from? This point enlarged on. But whilst you endeavor to prove this, try at least to be an instance of it yourself: this point also enlarged on. Innocence may challenge justice; but sin can only sue for pardon: justice you may have from nature, but pardon you must receive from grace and favor. The apophthegm of one of the wise men, *learn to know yourself*, is the first requisite in the choice of religion: this point exemplified in the case of a condemned malefactor, who must not sue to his prince in the same terms as a faithful and deserving subject may. Consider then with yourself; can you stand a trial with God? if so, justice will do you right; but if conscience cries out to you, *let us not enter into judgment with God, for in his sight shall no man living be justified*, then seek, if happily you may find, his mercy. The Christian religion is throughout adapted to the present nature and circumstances of mankind; nor can one see the reasonableness and beauty of the gospel, without considering the quality and condition of those for whose use it is designed: hence one great reason why the gospel has been so much undervalued in comparison with natural religion, that its end has been misunderstood. II. It is considered by what means Christ has wrought our redemption. *That God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*,

that is, without being offended at it, is a truth as discernible by the principles of reason as by the authority of revelation. The world then being in a state of corruption, men were manifestly become *the children of wrath*. To redeem it therefore, it was necessary that God should be reconciled to sinners, and should pardon the offences which could not be recalled, or through infirmity could not be avoided; to consider redemption otherwise, would be an attempt to rescue sinners from God's anger, whether he would or no. Look now into the gospel, and you will find that the only-begotten Son of God took our nature on him, and by a perfect obedience to his Father, and a voluntary death on the cross, completed this reconciliation, and obtained our pardon, in which properly consists the work of redemption. But to redeem men from God's displeasure, only that they might draw it on themselves afresh every day, would have been useless and unworthy of the Redeemer. To secure therefore the benefits of redemption to men, it was necessary for him to render them such as God might be pleased with; which he did by the powerful methods prescribed in the gospel for rectifying their depraved wills; and to render this effectual, he promised and bestowed on them the aid of his Holy Spirit, by which they might lay hold of eternal life. This is a short account of what Christ has done to save sinners; and in this what has any man to complain of? You have no reason to complain, you say: you are willing to be pardoned, but you cannot see how the death of Christ can reconcile God to sinners. But do you consider that you are the sinner, the person to be pardoned? Is it your's, or your offended Master's business, to judge of the proper means of reconciliation? Surely it is his: why then debate a point in which you have no farther interest than to accept the blessing granted on any motives? If we cannot fully comprehend the reason of these means, there is but one just consequence, viz. that the counsels of God are unfathomable by human reason:

nor can this be any surprise to a considering man, who daily sees the same truth confirmed: this point enlarged on. Leaving then these curious inquiries, let us be content that God should be wiser than man; considering that, although he has concealed from us the secrets of his wisdom, he has manifested his love towards us, and that his mercy shines forth unclouded in every page of the gospel. These advantages so correspond to the sentiments of nature within us, that it is strange to find the pretensions of nature opposed to the Christian revelation: this point enlarged on to the end.

DISCOURSE LII.

I TIMOTHY, CHAP. I.—VERSE 15.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

THESE words contain the great charter of the Christian church, and are the title by which we claim all the benefits and promises of the gospel. If you inquire on what pretence we proclaim the peace of God to mankind, on what confidence we offer pardon to sinners, who according to the terms of natural justice are 'vessels of wrath fitted for destruction;' we answer in the words of the text, 'That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners:' and that in his name we preach salvation, and peace, and pardon to offenders.

This is the doctrine which, together with the principles on which it is founded, and the consequences naturally flowing from it, distinguishes the Christian religion from all other religions whatever. The hopes peculiar to believers are built on this great article; and whatever advantages and favors we pretend to under the gospel, more than can be claimed on the terms of justice and natural religion, are to be ascribed to this only, 'That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'

Whoever therefore rejects this article, he does indeed reject the Christian religion: I mean not that such a one must necessarily reject all the religion contained in the books of the gospel; for the moral duties of the gospel are the very duties of natural religion, improved and carried into perfection; and the man who receives not Christ for his Saviour and Redeemer, may yet receive the doctrines of morality, as taught and explained

by him, because he finds them agreeable to the light of his own reason and understanding.

The difference then between a true Deist and the Christian arises from the doctrine contained in the text. They both equally believe the being and providence of God: and the obligations of morality are equally admitted on both sides. The necessity of a virtuous life, in obedience to these obligations, is no matter of dispute: at least there is no reason why it should be matter of dispute between them. The Deist has no room to doubt in this case; for he has no other hope than in his obedience, which of necessity therefore must be so perfect as to render him acceptable in the sight of his equitable Judge: and if the Christian builds so far on other hopes as to neglect the weighty matters of the law, he deceives himself, and abuses the gospel of his Saviour.

But then in other respects they differ widely: the Deist reckons himself and the rest of mankind to be in that state of nature in which God created them, and therefore capable of obtaining, by the present powers of nature, the end designed by God for man. In consequence of this, as he owns the duty of obeying God, so in right of his obedience he claims his favor and protection. The Christian is persuaded that man has fallen from the state of innocence in which he was created; that being a sinner, he has no claim on God by his obedience, but stands in need of pardon; and that being now weak, through sin, he stands in need of grace and assistance to enable him to perform the conditions on which the pardon of God is offered: and he believes that God has indeed pardoned mankind, and granted them reconciliation, being thereunto moved by the obedience and sufferings of his Son Christ Jesus; and that he hath promised, and will surely give his grace and assistance to all true believers in Christ, to enable them to perform the conditions of his pardon.

What the Christian thus believes, the gospel plainly teaches: and these are the great points to be made good; and they are briefly comprehended in the words of the text, 'That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.'

To illustrate and confirm this proposition, it will be proper to show,

First, what reason we have to believe that men were sinners, and stood in need of pardon and salvation.

Secondly, by what means Christ perfected their redemption and salvation.

The first question is, what reason have we to believe that men were sinners, and stood in need of pardon?

It is a saying of St. Austin's, *Si non periisset homo, non venisset Christus;* 'If man had not fallen, Christ had not come:' and our Lord speaks to the same sense when he tells us, 'The son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost:' and his answer to those who reproached him with conversing with publicans and sinners stands on the same ground: 'They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.' Had man continued in innocence, the religion of nature would have answered all the ends of his creation; he wanted no redeemer in his natural state; for it would be absurd to suppose that Christ came to redeem man from the state and condition in which God made him. After the works of the creation were finished, God liked them all, and 'saw every thing that he had made; and behold it was very good:' in this state therefore nothing was wanting to the perfection of the creature: God was pleased with all his works, and with man especially, to whom he gave dominion over the rest of the world. In this state therefore there was no want of a reconciler between God and man; nor would there ever have been any such want, had this happy state continued.

That innocence and virtue shall be rewarded, guilt and iniquity punished, is no more than what natural sense and reason have always taught the considering part of mankind: for the voice of reason and of the law are in this respect the same, 'This do, and thou shalt live.' And though man is altered and changed, yet the nature of things is still the same; and he is no ill reasoner, who, from the abstracted consideration of virtue and vice, concludes that virtue has a just title to reward, and vice deserves punishment: and it is no wonder that they who argue on these general views only, should imagine that moral virtue may still exalt a man to all the degrees of happiness that his nature is capable of.

In the celebrated question concerning the merit of good works,

there has arose much confusion, for want of distinguishing between good works, simply and in their own nature considered, and considered as done or performed by the sons of men. The first is a single question: whether virtue in its own nature has a title to reward? And who will deny it? For as sure as God is just, as sure as there is a difference between good and evil, he will, he must reward the one, and punish the other. But when you ask, whether the good works of men deserve and merit reward? you strangely alter the state of the question; for here not only the nature of good works, but the nature and condition of man must be considered too. If he has already concluded himself, if sentence is gone out against him, and his case be irretrievable, your question must be impertinent; because you ask, whether he who is already under condemnation for his evil works, may be rewarded for his good works?

Put the case, that a man ten years ago committed a secret and barbarous murder: that since he has lived in an unblameable submission and obedience to the government; ask then the question, whether submission and obedience to the government have a right and title to protection and defence in life and fortune? Every man will answer, yes. But ask again, whether this man's obedience and submission have the same right and title? Every man will answer, no: because the villany committed long since puts him out of protection of the government, and justice is still indebted to him for the horrid fact; and whenever it meets him, will execute on him wrath and vengeance.

I intend not to press this instance to a parallel with our case: but thus much at least it shows, that virtue and morality may, in their own nature, and in themselves considered, deserve reward from a just and righteous Being; and yet the virtue and morality of man may not deserve it. And this is the parting point between the patrons of natural and revealed religion; the not considering which has made some imagine that, whilst we defend the authority of revelation, we give up the principles of reason and nature. Is there not, say they, an essential difference between virtue and vice? True, there is. Is not justice the attribute of God? and must not a just God reward virtue and punish vice? True still. Is not this then, say they, a suf-

ficient foundation for religion, without recurring to grace and faith, or miracles, or mysteries? True, it is, where native innocence is preserved, where religion is *res integra:* but what will you say of those who have already offended? Consult your principles of reason; the voice of nature is, that vice must be punished; if so, all that offenders, all that sinners can expect from natural religion is the just reward of their sins and offences: and whether these are such terms and conditions as should endear natural religion to sinners, common sense shall judge.

Were Christianity to be preached to a new race of men, created without spot of sin, or stain of guilt, they might well wonder at the condition of faith and repentance; at the doctrine of salvation by the righteousness of Christ, and not by their own; and that their happiness should depend not on their own works, but on the free grace and promise of God: they might well ask, why should God make that a matter of free grace and promise, which must be the necessary effect and consequence of his justice? Why may we not be saved by our own righteousness, since righteousness has a natural claim to happiness? What should we repent of, who have done no harm? or what other object have we for faith than the justice of God, which is the foundation on which religion stands? But should this new race fall from innocence, and stand liable to the punishments of vice; should you then ask them where their hopes were, they would not answer, I presume, in the justice of God, or argue on the right that virtue has to reward; but could they express any hope, it would be in the mercy and forgiveness of God. And whence must this forgiveness come? Is it the gift o f God, or is it the reward of sin? If it is the gift of God, then it is free grace: if it be the gift of God, then he alone can tell whether he will give it or no; and you cannot know it unless he declares it: what God declares is a revelation; and all the assurance you can have that he will be as good as his word is, that you believe and depend on his truth for the performance of what he has promised. From whence it evidently follows, that the religion of a sinner must be a revealed religion, and the principle of it must be faith.

Some, I know, contend that it may be proved, from the

mercies and goodness of God, that he will forgive sinners. If so, there can be no such thing as natural religion: for it is demonstrable, from the justice of God, that he must reward virtue and punish vice; and if it be demonstrable too from his mercy that he must forgive sin, then natural religion includes the greatest contradiction in nature, that sin necessarily must, and necessarily must not, be punished. If you say only that it is probable that a merciful God will pity the folly and weakness of human kind, and recede from the strictness of justice in his dealings with them; so say we too: but probability cannot infer necessity; and if it be not necessary that he should do it, it must then depend on his will whether he will do it or no; and your hopes and your religion must be resolved, not into the evidence of nature, but into the evidence of free grace; which evidence can be no other than revelation; for the Spirit only searcheth the deep things of God, and the Spirit only can bring them to light.

Would you then disprove revelation, and discard the religion of Christ? For once you must prove mankind to be in a state of innocence and purity; and then it will be senseless to talk of redemption; for what should innocence be redeemed from? You must show that nature is not vitiated or corrupted, that the flesh does not lust against the mind; but that there is a mutual agreement, and the flesh obeys the mind, and the mind obeys God: then may you at once reject the doctrine of repentance, of free grace, of justification through the blood of Christ. But whilst you endeavor to prove this, try at least to be an instance of it yourself; let innocence be your outward garment, and purity your inward: let your hands be void of evil: let not your eye glance on the large possessions of your neighbor, nor so much as one thought wander towards his wife or daughter: let your heart be the fountain of unbounded love and good will, and the grave of malice and revenge, where all injuries and affronts, all resentments shall lie buried and inactive, and be as though they were not: and when you have gained this experimental evidence from yourself, of the innocence and goodness of Nature, it will then be time enough to set up for a patron of her cause, and to assert her right to heaven on the foot of native righteousness; till then at least, how

innocent soever you may suppose others to be, yet for your own sake wish that there may be redemption for sinners; that God may visit the world, not in justice, but in mercy.

Innocence may challenge justice; but sin can only sue for pardon. Justice you may have from nature; but pardon you must have from grace and favor. It was an apophthegm of one of the wise men, Γνῶθι σεαυτὸν, 'Learn to know yourself:' and this is the first thing necessary in order to choose your religion, rightly to know and understand your own condition. A condemned malefactor must not sue to his prince in the same terms that a faithful and deserving subject may: the one may represent his service and obedience; the other has nothing to plead but his misery: one applies to the justice and generosity of the prince; the other to his pity and compassion. Consider then with yourself; can you stand a trial with God? Can you plead your services to him, and say, Behold thy servant; do unto him according to his works? If you can, justice will do you right: but if your heart misgives you; if your conscience cries out to you, Let us not enter into judgment with our God, for in his sight shall no man living be justified; what have you to do but to seek, if happily you may find, the mercy of God?

The Christian religion is, in all its parts, adapted to the present nature and circumstances of mankind; and it is not possible to see the reasonableness and beauty of the gospel, without considering the quality and condition of those for whose use and benefit it is designed: and this, I believe, is one great reason why the gospel has been so much undervalued in comparison with natural religion, that the end of it has not been rightly understood. But if we reflect on the dealings of God with mankind from the beginning, and the behavior of men towards God, and from thence deduce the state and condition of mankind before the coming of Christ; this will enable us to judge what was wanting towards making mankind happy; and will show us how proper and reasonable, how perfect and adequate a means the gospel of Christ is.

Secondly, let us consider by what means Christ has wrought this redemption.

What the Scripture tells us of the nature of God, 'That he

is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,' i. e. to behold it without being offended at it, is a truth as discernible by the principles of reason as by the authority of revelation. The fact then supposed, which cannot be contested, that the world was in a state of corruption and degeneracy, it is manifest they were fallen under the displeasure of God, or, in the language of Scripture, were become 'children of wrath.' To redeem the world, therefore, it was necessary that God should be reconciled to sinners, and should pardon the offences which could not be recalled, or which, through infirmity of nature, could not be avoided. To think of a redemption on any other foot would be absolutely absurd; it would be an attempt to rescue sinners from the displeasure and anger of God, whether he would or no.

Look now into the gospel, and see how this case stands there. You will find that the only-begotten Son of God took our nature on him; and that by a perfect obedience to the voice of his Father, and a voluntary resignation of himself to the cross, he made and completed this reconciliation, and proclaimed the pardon of God to the lost sons of Adam. And in this properly consists the work of redemption.

But to redeem men from the displeasure of God, and leave them in a condition to draw it on themselves afresh every day, would have been an useless undertaking, and unworthy of his dignity who was employed in it. To secure therefore the benefit of the redemption which he had purchased with his blood to mankind, it was necessary to restore them to such a state as might render them fit objects for God to take pleasure in. This too he did by the powerful methods prescribed in the gospel for rectifying the corrupt and depraved wills of men, by the many revelations relating to his own spiritual kingdom, given to clear and enlighten their understanding in the things belonging to their salvation; the knowlege of which had been lost, or so darkened and obscured by the fall as to be of no efficacy in reforming the world. And to render these means effectual to the purposes of salvation, he promised and bestowed the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to enable men to receive and to lay hold of eternal life.

This is a short account of what Christ has done to save sin-

ners. He has reconciled God to you: have you any reason to be offended? He has procured your pardon: has he injured you by so doing? If not, what is it any man has to complain of? It is true you will say, so far you have no reason to complain: you are willing to be pardoned; but you cannot see that the death of Christ was a proper means to reconcile God to sinners. But do you consider who you are when you make this objection? You are the sinner, the person to be pardoned: does it belong to you, or to your offended Master, to judge what are the proper means of reconciliation? If to him only, (and surely that is the case,) why do you debate a point in which you have no interest or concern, farther than to accept the blessing, on whatever motives it was granted? God has assured you of his pardon, and given his word, confirmed by signs and wonders, and by raising him to life who died for you. If you believe him, you may rest secure that he has not made use of improper means to effect his gracious purposes to men.

If the wisdom of God has ordained means for the salvation of man, of which we cannot fully comprehend the reason, I know but one just consequence that can be deduced from it; that the counsels of God are too deep to be fathomed by the short line of human reason; and surely this can be no news, no surprise to a considering man, who sees every day the same truth confirmed in an hundred instances. That you live and have a being in this world, is out of doubt: but tell me how; show the spring of life, the principle of motion and activity within you: and when you do, I may venture to undertake to explain to you the means by which you shall be brought to life hereafter. But let us leave all these curious inquiries, and be content that God should be wiser than man; especially considering, that though he has concealed from us the secrets of his wisdom, yet he has fully exposed to our view his love to mankind: his mercy shines out in the fullest lustre in every page of the gospel, and there is no cloud to obscure it.

The advantages procured for us, and the discoveries made to us by the gospel of Christ, do so correspond to the sentiments of nature within us, that it is wonderful to find the pretensions of nature set in opposition to the Christian revelation. The

moral duties of the gospel are but the dictates of reason and nature carried into their just conclusions: the promises of the gospel contain the very hopes of nature confirmed and made sure to us. If the gospel has promised pardon to sinners, it is but what Nature teaches all her children to seek for: and if Nature teaches you to hope for mercy, is your case become the worse because God, through Christ, has promised it? Natural conscience tells us we are accountable to him who made us: is it not the same declaration made in the gospel, 'That God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world?' Is not Nature ever looking out, and with unutterable groans panting after life for evermore? Has she any reason then to fly from him who hath 'brought life and immortality to light through his gospel?'

Go then and learn of Nature to value these great gifts: attend to her silent voice within you: it will speak in the language of the Apostle, and tell you, 'This saying is worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE LIII.

I THESSALONIANS, CHAP. I.—VERSES 9. 10.

In the verse before the text, the Apostle tells the Thessalonians that not only the word of the Lord had sounded out from them in Macedonia and Achaia, but their faith towards God was spread abroad in every place; so that there is no need, says he, to speak of the doctrines delivered by me, and received by you: the thing is well known, *for they themselves show of us*, &c. Hence it is evident what notion was entertained by the world of the Christian religion and its principal doctrines. The Apostle's business was well known to be, to turn men from idols to serve the living God, to give evidence of Christ's resurrection, and to raise certain expectations of his coming again with power and glory to judge the world: this common report was so just an account of the Apostle's doctrine, that there was no room left to enlarge or correct it: *in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.* Considering then this early account of the Christian religion, we find it to consist of two principal parts; the first relating to the service owing to the living God; the second, to our faith in Christ, and to our hope and expectation grounded on that faith. Religion, under the first head, must be natural religion, or true uncorrupted Deism: this was the original religion of mankind, of which, through abuse and corruption, hardly any sign was left at our Saviour's coming. However rightly some few might think, yet they were obliged to follow the world: few attempted, none succeeded in a reformation of the public religion; nor is there an instance of any people who

served God on the principles of natural religion: this reformation was effected only by the preaching of the gospel, which revived the true ancient religion of nature, and prepared men for its reception; and has, by the additional supports of revelation, maintained it for ages, and will probably maintain it to the end of all things. These additional supports make the second great branch of Christian doctrine: they are revived on the authority of revelation, and stand on the evidence of external proofs: that we ought to turn from idols, and serve God, &c. are truths which any reasonable being may feel; but that we have been delivered from wrath by the Son of God, who is appointed to be judge of the dead and of the living, &c.; these are articles which no man's reason can suggest, and which, when suggested, reason cannot receive on any internal evidence, but on authority founded on external testimony. This distinction, constantly attended to, will go far to show us the true temper, genius, and ends of Christianity. The gospel, considered in its precepts and morality, and with respect to its new doctrines or articles of belief, supports and encourages true religion. This might be shown in the several particulars of the gospel dispensation: confined here to those specified in the text. The sense of the expression, *to wait for the Son of God from heaven*, is completely expressed in Phil. iii. 17. 20. 21. The expectation of Christ coming to judge the world is peculiar to Christians, and is supported by the belief of the resurrection, that main point of faith which the Apostles were to teach and establish in the church of God; whence arose the qualification necessary for an Apostle, viz. the capability of bearing witness to the resurrection: (Acts i. 21. 22.) And St. Peter, in the next chapter, vindicating to the Jews the miraculous gift of tongues bestowed on the day of Pentecost, renders a similar account of the work and ministry of the Apostleship. Several other passages of a like tendency quoted: from which, taken together, it plainly appears how much the Christian religion, considered as a dis-

tinct system from natural religion, depends on the belief of the resurrection of Christ. The Apostles were ordained to be witnesses of this article; and on this they founded their doctrine, whether they preached to the Jews or to the Gentiles. When St. Paul preached this same doctrine at Athens, he was thought to be an introducer of some new deities, (Acts xvii. 18.) This doctrine of a resurrection he afterwards fully expounded to them, together with its consequents, (30. 31.) This new article was introduced to be a new evidence of a future state of rewards and punishments, and to support the sinner's hopes of pardon through the promises of Christ. We see then its use: let us consider now whether we are beholden to the gospel, and how much, for this new evidence of a life to come; what is in it, or the doctrines grounded on it, that any sober Deist or professor of natural religion can justly blame. Natural religion pretends to support itself on the expectation of future rewards and punishments: it considers God as Governor and Judge of the world. Christianity stands on the same foundation, and admits for genuine all these hopes and fears of nature. Thus far then they differ not: the question is, which brings the best proof, and most fitted to persuade the world of these great truths? This point enlarged on; showing that the one appeals to conscience, and that the other embraces all this evidence, together with the suggestions of reason, and the express testimony and assurance of God given to mankind. But what need of this new evidence? If the arguments from natural religion were sufficient to support the belief and expectation of a future judgment, why call men from a dependence on their reason, to rely on the evidence of men for the truth of a fact in its nature hard to be believed? one in which we might have doubted even our own senses, much more those of others? Whoever, in answer to this difficulty, endeavors to weaken the natural arguments for a future state, is very ill employed: they are in themselves convincing; but they require more thought than the generality of men can be-

stow on them : whether this be so or no, the evidence of history must determine : under the light we now enjoy, we are ill judges how far men could go, aided only by the mere strength of reason. A right notion of God is the foundation of all true religion; for which notion each thanks his own reason : and if so, the world has mightily improved in reason during these last ages; since it was not so until the publication of the gospel made reason see and approve the truths which were before in a great measure hid from her eyes. The case is the same with respect to the natural arguments for a future state : this point enlarged on. To remedy this evil, God has proposed a new evidence, resurrection of his Son, shown before chosen witnesses, who were sent into the world to publish it as an evidence of a future general resurrection of men, and to seal the truth of the doctrine with their blood. Such evidence requires no abstract reasoning, no refinements, to show its force : this point enlarged on. Those who pretend to be real Deists, cannot be offended by this evidence, as the main thing we prove by it they acknowlege to be true, viz. that God will judge the world. If then the Christian religion has no private design to serve by this evidence, but produces it to confirm that natural sense which all true religion admits, why should it be suspected of deceit? Besides, the belief of a future state, supported by the evidence of Christ's resurrection, is applied only to those purposes which a wise and good man would desire. The gospel labors to assure us of the certainty of our resurrection to eternal life, and in addition to the common evidence of reason, has given us a new proof from the very hand and immediate power of God ; for the establishing of which proof it shows such concern, that we may be sure it was provided to forward the design of the gospel; so that if there be any deceit in the gospel, it must lean on this article for its support : this point enlarged on ; showing that the gospel requires nothing but what reason and natural religion

require also. One thing in the Scripture account of a future state is new, the designation of the man Christ Jesus as Judge of the quick and dead: this is however liable to no objections on the part of natural religion, which requires not that God should do every thing immediately by himself; nor is it any impeachment of his authority: the Son acts by the Father's commission, who hath given all judgment to him: it makes no change in the nature of the judgment: we shall answer for nothing to Christ but what reason tells us we are accountable for. There is this difference between the Deist and the Christian believer: the latter has not only the same hopes of futurity, and in the same degree, which reason and reflexion can furnish; but he has also the express promise and testimony of God, confirmed by his Son's resurrection. Suppose him mistaken, he stands on the same ground the other does: suppose his faith well established, he can give a better account of his hope. Thus the gospel has supplied the defect of natural religion on this momentous point: to the wisdom of this provision experience can bear witness: this point enlarged on. The resurrection indeed was a stupendous work; but the hand that performed it was greater. He who believes that God created men, cannot doubt his power to raise them from the grave. But allowing God to be omnipotent, still you say the resurrection, as a fact, requires proof; and proved it is by the concurrent testimony of eye-witnesses, who have given not only their words, but their lives in its confirmation: surely they were in earnest, when they embraced and taught the doctrine on such hard terms; nor can any serious person disbelieve them. Did this article alter our notions of God or religion, and lay any new burden on us, then men might be careful how they admitted it: but as this is not the case, as it pretends only to establish and confirm the hopes of nature, why such scruples? Admit it; our hopes are much improved; our duty nothing increased: reject it,

our duty is the same, and our hopes much less. How kind a provision then has the gospel made for our weakness! and how powerfully has it supported the interest of true religion, by furnishing us with so plain and yet so strong a proof of a future state, and of a judgment to be executed in righteousness!

DISCOURSE LIII.

1 THESSALONIANS, CHAP. I.—VERSES 9. 10.

For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

In the verse before the text the Apostle tells the Thessalonians, that not only the word of the Lord had sounded out from them in Macedonia and Achaia, but their faith also towards God was spread abroad in every place; so that there is no occasion, adds the Apostle, for me to say any thing of the doctrines delivered by me, and received by you: the thing is well known, and notorious to all the world: 'They themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you.'

It is evident from hence what notion the world entertained of the Christian religion, and the principal doctrines of it, in the earliest days. All who had heard of our Apostle's teaching, knew his business to be to turn men from idols to serve the living God, to give evidence of the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead, and to establish a certain expectation of his coming again with power and glory to judge the world. This common report St. Paul allows to be so just and adequate an account of his doctrine, as to leave no room to enlarge or correct it: 'In every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.'

If we consider this early account of the Christian religion, so universally received, and so well approved by the Apostle, we shall find it to consist of two principal parts: the first relating to the service owing to the living God; the second to

our faith in Christ, and our hope and expectation grounded on that faith.

Religion, considered under the notion of a service we owe to God, can be no other than natural religion, or true uncorrupted Deism. This was the old original religion of mankind, but had been so corrupted and abused, that there was hardly any sign of it left when our Saviour appeared in the world. However rightly some few might think, yet they found themselves obliged to follow the world, and practise with the vulgar. Not many attempted, and none succeeded in a reformation of the public religion. No antiquity affords an instance of any people, great or small, who served God on the principles of natural religion. The only general and effectual reformation of the world was brought about by the preaching of the gospel; which revived and introduced the true ancient religion of nature, and prepared men for the reception of it; and has, by the additional supports of revelation, maintained it for many ages, and probably will maintain it to the end and consummation of all things.

These additional supports make the second great branch of Christian doctrine: they are revived on the authority of revelation, and stand on the evidence of external proofs. That we ought to turn from idols and serve the living God; that we ought to serve him in holiness and purity, in conforming ourselves to the example of his justice, equity, and goodness, are truths which every man may feel to be such, who has any reason or natural feeling about him: but that we have been delivered from the wrath to come by Jesus the Son of God; that God raised him from the dead, and hath appointed him to be judge both of the dead and of the living, are articles which no man's reason can suggest; which, when suggested, reason cannot receive on any internal evidence, but must take them on an authority sufficiently confirmed and established on external evidence.

This distinction, constantly attended to, will go a great way in showing us the true temper and genius of the Christian religion, and the end proposed by its divine author. Consider the gospel in its precepts and morality; and is there any doctrine advanced, any duty required, but what reason must admit and

approve, or which it can reject without doing violence to itself? Is there in this respect any objection against the Christian religion, but what is and must be equally an objection against all natural religion? Consider the gospel with respect to its new doctrines, its articles of belief: you will find them all assigned to support and encourage true religion, and to preserve the world from falling again into that confusion of idolatry and superstition, which for many ages held it in darkness. This might be shown in the several particulars of the gospel dispensation: but I shall confine myself to those specified in the text.

St. Paul teaches us 'to wait for the Son of God from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.'

'To wait for the Son of God from heaven,' signifies to continue with patience and well-doing, in expectation of the coming of our Saviour and Judge; which sense is completely expressed, Philip. iii. 'Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample —for our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.'

The expectation of Christ coming to judge the world is peculiar to Christians; and it is supported by the belief of the resurrection of Christ, that great and main point of faith which the Apostles were commissioned to teach and establish in the church of God: for which reason, when an Apostle was to be chosen in the room of Judas, the qualification required in the person to succeed was, that he should be one capable of bearing testimony of the resurrection of Christ. Take the account in St. Peter's own words: 'Of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out amongst us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection:' Acts i. 21. 22. And in the next chapter St. Peter, vindicating to the Jews the miraculous gift of tongues bestowed on the day of Pentecost,

renders this account of the work and ministry of the apostleship: 'Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did, by him, in the midst of you—Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowlege of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:' ver. 22. 23. 'This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses:' ver. 32. To the same purpose again, in the third chapter, 'Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead: whereof we are witnesses:' ver. 14. 15. In the fourth chapter an account is given of the courage and boldness of the Apostles in preaching Christ to the rulers, and of the success of their ministry among the people: the sum of it we have in these words: 'With great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was on them all:' ver. 33. In the fifth chapter the Apostles are called again before the council: the high priest charges them with disobeying the injunctions given them not to preach in Christ's name: St. Peter and the rest answer him and the council, by opening to them the commission and authority by which they acted, and the doctrine which they taught: 'We ought,' say they, 'to obey God rather than man. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree: him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him:' ver. 29. 30. 31. 32. From these passages of Scripture, taken together, it plainly appears how much the Christian religion, considered as a distinct system from natural religion, depends on the belief of the resurrection of Christ. The Apostles were ordained to be witnesses of this article: this article is the foundation on which they build all the hopes and expectations peculiar to Christians: if they preach repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins, it is in his name, whom God raised from the dead: if they turn to the Gentiles with offers of peace and reconciliation, it is still in his name, whom God raised

from the dead, and ordained to be the Judge of quick and dead.

When St. Paul preached at Athens, they thought him an introducer of some new deities, he talked so much of 'Jesus and the resurrection:' Acts xvii. 18. Which doctrine of a resurrection he afterwards fully expounded to them, together with the consequents belonging to it: 'Now,' says the Apostle, 'God commandeth all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead:' v. 30. 31. This passage of St. Paul gives a very plain account of the concern to propagate and establish the article of Christ's resurrection. The resurrection of Christ was designed to be an evidence and assurance to the world of God's intention to judge the world in righteousness. This new article was introduced to be a new evidence of a future state of rewards and punishments, and to support the sinner's hopes of pardon and reconciliation through the promises of Christ, whom God had appointed to be his Judge.

You see then the use of this great article of Christian faith. Let us consider now whether we are beholden to the gospel, and how much, for this new evidence of a life to come; and what there is in this article, and the doctrines grounded on it, that any sober Deist, or professor of natural religion, can justly blame.

Natural religion pretends to support itself on the expectation of future rewards and punishments: it considers God as Governor and Judge of the world. Christian religion stands on the same foundation, and admits for genuine all these hopes and fears of nature. Thus far there is no difference. The question is, which brings the best proof, and most fitted to persuade the world of this great truth? Natural religion appeals to conscience, and that sense which all men have of their being accountable for their actions. The Christian religion embraces all this evidence, and whatever else can be suggested by reason to render the hopes of futurity probable or certain: to these evidences it adds the express testimony and assurance of

God given to mankind in the resurrection of his beloved Son Jesus Christ.

But what need, you will say, of this new evidence? Were not the arguments which natural religion affords, sufficient to support the belief and expectation of a future judgment? If so, to what purpose is it to call men from a dependence on their reason, to rely on the evidence of men for the truth of a fact so uncommon, and in the nature of it so surprising, as not easily to gain admittance to our belief? a fact, which had we seen ourselves, we might perhaps have suspected the report of our own senses, and cannot therefore easily refer ourselves to the senses of others, in a matter of so great moment and consequence?

Whoever, in answer to this difficulty, endeavors to weaken and enervate the natural arguments for a future state, is, I think, very ill employed: to me they appear so convincing, that I cannot, so amiable, that I would not lessen your opinion of them: but then it is certain that they require more thought and speculation to place them before the mind in their true and strongest light, than the generality of men are capable of exercising. And whether this be so or no, is a matter fitter to be determined by the evidence of history, than by reasoning on the case. We are very ill judges, under the light we now enjoy, how far the generality of men could go by the mere strength of reason, without the assistances we have. A right notion of God is the foundation of all true religion; and who is there that thinks himself obliged to any thing but his own reason for this notion? and yet, if this be the case, the world is mightily improved in reason these last ages: for we certainly know many ages past, when the true notion of God was hardly to be found in any nation, commonly to be found in none. Since the publication of the gospel the darkness has been dispelled, and reason sees and approves the truths which were before in great measure hid from her eyes. The case is the same with respect to the natural arguments for a future state: the arguments duly proposed and considered are of great weight: but yet it is evident they had little weight in the world for many ages together. The natural notion was so buried under superstitious fables and absurd representations,

that it yielded no comfort or satisfaction; was so liable to be exposed and ridiculed for the extravagant representations which attended it, that it afforded no certainty, or even probability, to support the hopes of virtue: the vulgar had no ability to reason much on the case; and the learned, who did, were full of doubts and uncertainties, and found no sure ground to stand on. To remedy this evil, God has proposed a new evidence to the world: he called his Son from the grave, and showed him before chosen witnesses for many days: who were sent into the world to publish his resurrection, as an evidence of a future general resurrection of all men, and to seal the truth of their doctrine with their own blood.

Now, as to this evidence, it is in the nature of it the properest for the generality of men; it requires no abstracted reasoning, no refinements, to show the force of it: nay, were the wisest man to choose an evidence for himself of the certainty of a resurrection, I know not what he could desire more than to see one rise from the dead.

As to those who pretend to be real and true Deists, I cannot see what there is in this evidence to offend them: the main thing we prove by it they acknowlege to be true, that God will judge the world. Since then the Christian religion has no private design to serve by this evidence, but produces it in confirmation of the general sense of nature which all true religion does admit, why should it be suspected of deceit?

Besides, the belief of a future state, supported by the evidence of the resurrection of Christ, is applied to no other purposes in the Christian religion, than every wise and good man would desire it should be applied to, were it a matter to be submitted to his choice. Let us see: the gospel labors to assure us of the certainty of our resurrection to eternal life; and not content with the common evidence of reason for a future state, has given us a new proof from the very hand and immediate power of God: there is such a concern showed in the gospel for fixing and establishing this proof, that we may be sure this proof was provided for the sake of carrying on the great end and design of the gospel, whatever it is: so that if there is any thing amiss, any delusion or deceit in the gospel, we may certainly find it leaning on this article of the resur-

rection for its support. But now, what does the gospel require of us, in virtue of our belief of this article? Why, nothing but what reason and natural religion require of us: to live soberly and righteously, in obedience to God, and in love with our brethren. Where is there any ground now for suspicion in the case? Men do not use to play tricks, or endeavor to impose on the world for nothing. Show us then any one use made of this article in the gospel, but what all sober-minded men will allow to be a just and proper use, and we will part with our evidence: but if no such thing can be showed, never suspect any guile or deceit in the evidence calculated to serve and promote such noble and worthy purposes.

One thing there is in the Scripture account of a future state that is new, the designation of the man Christ Jesus for Judge of the quick and the dead: but this is such a new thing as is liable to no objections on the part of natural religion; for it is no part of natural religion to maintain that God must do every thing immediately by himself, and in his own person, without using the agency or ministry of other beings. This designation of Christ to be Judge of the world is no impeachment of the authority of God: the Son acts by the Father's commission, who hath given all judgment to him: it makes no change in the nature of the judgment: we shall answer for nothing to Christ, but what our reason tells us we are accountable for. So that take in all the circumstances belonging to this article of Christian faith, and yet there is nothing for you to do, nothing for you to expect, but what you are already persuaded you ought to do and expect, if you are in truth so honest and sincere a professor of natural religion as to believe in God, and that he will judge the world in truth and justice. This difference there is between you and a Christian believer: you have such hopes of futurity as reason and reflexion can furnish out: the Christian has the same hopes, and in the same degree; but has moreover the express promise and testimony of God, confirmed by the resurrection of his only Son, to strengthen his expectations of immortality. Suppose the Christian mistaken, even then he stands on the same ground that you do; suppose his faith to be well established, he stands on much better, and

is able to render to himself a better account of the hope that is in him. This is the advantage we draw from this great article of faith: an article introduced to serve true religion, founded on an evidence of such force, that it can make its way to every understanding, and wants no help from philosophy to support it.

Thus you see how the gospel has supplied the defect of natural religion in this momentous point: how wisely this provision of the gospel was made, let experience bear witness. Wherever the gospel prevails, the hopes of immortality are clear and distinct: the preaching the resurrection of Christ conveys to the lowest member of the church of Christ a clear conception of his own future condition.

The resurrection itself was indeed a great and stupendous work; but the hand that performed it was greater. No one, who believes that God made all men at first, can possibly doubt of his power to raise them again from the grave. Allow, you will say, to the power of God all that can be desired; yet still the resurrection remains to be proved as to the fact: and proved it is by the concurrent testimony of eye-witnesses, who have given not only their words, but their very lives, in confirmation of this truth: and surely they were in very good earnest, when they embraced and taught the doctrine on such hard terms. And methinks no serious man should be very hard of belief in this case. Did the article of the resurrection make any alteration in our notions of God or of religion; did it bring any new burden on us of any sort, it would be no wonder to see men very careful how they admitted it: but now that it requires nothing at our hands but what reason and nature require, is attended with no burden or expense to us, pretends only to establish and confirm the hopes of nature, what pretence for being so very scrupulous? Admit the article, your hopes are much improved, your duty nothing increased; reject the article, your duty is the same, and your hopes much less.

How kind a provision has the gospel made for our weakness! how powerfully has it supported the interest of true religion, by furnishing the world with so plain and yet so strong a proof of a future state, and a judgment to be executed in

righteousness, by the man Christ Jesus, whom God raised from the dead, and hath ordained to be the Judge of all the world! Let us hold fast this hope: let this hope be our constant encouragement in doing the work of the Lord; let us do his work cheerfully and heartily, knowing for certain that 'our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.'

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE LIV.

PROVERBS, CHAP. IX.—VERSE 10.

THE advantages which we may expect to reap from religion are many and great, but not all equally certain: some are exposed to the chances of human life, and depend on circumstances over which we have no control: hence it is that the best men sometimes have the severest trials and sharpest afflictions. But there are two things which sincere religion is sure to obtain, one of which is the foundation of all happiness here; the other is the happiness and immortality hereafter: this blessing we can only enjoy now through faith and hope; the other is a necessary attendant on a mind truly good and religious, viz. the peace and tranquillity of mind which flow not so much from an exact discharge of our duties, but from a due sense of God and religion, and an upright desire of serving him. Properly speaking, this is not a reward given to the virtuous; but it arises from the very nature of things, from the frame and contexture of our souls; it is virtue's own natural offspring, which can never forsake her. Since nature then has given us notice of the being of the Almighty, and shown us, from our relation to him, the service which we owe him, this sense, properly pursued in an honest discharge of our duty, must breed in our minds true peace and comfort; and therefore true religion must be the source even of our temporal happiness. Yet the face of things in the world has a different appearance: religion is fearful, suspicious, dissatisfied with itself, always seeking, but seldom finding where to rest: hence the misconceptions of men concerning religion itself, who think it better

to give it up intirely, than perpetually to fluctuate in doubt: and thus superstition, by making many miserable in the pursuit of religion, makes others, to avoid that gulf, throw themselves into the deeper one of atheism and irreligion: thus true religion is lost, and its companion, peace of mind: for view God from either extreme, and you see him in terrors; you behold not the kinder rays of his mercy: the cases of these two extremes enlarged on. It is therefore worth while to search into the causes of this unhappiness, whence arises the corruption of this living spring. The text, rightly understood, not only affords occasion for this inquiry, but directs us in it; for by showing us the principles of true religion, it helps us to discover the errors which produce irreligion and superstition. Two things proposed: I. to show that the text and other like passages of holy Scripture will be found on examination to set forth that a just conception of God, his excellencies and perfections, is the true foundation of religion: II. that this just conception of God is the right rule to form our judgments by in all particular matters of religion, and alone can secure us from either atheism or superstition.—I. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* Some might think it sufficient to observe that fear, whatever limited or enlarged notion of it we may have, is not a voluntary passion, but necessarily relates to and arises from the notion or conception we have of the thing feared; and that there is the same distinction between the different kinds of fear: these points enlarged on, and the sources of a base and slavish fear, and of a filial fear and veneration shown: hence we cannot understand the sense of the proposition, without a notion of the thing feared: thus the fear of a tyrant and that of a father are different; but without knowing the difference between a tyrant and a father, we shall not be able to distinguish these passions. The same rule is applicable to the expression in the text. Allowing this *fear of the Lord* to mean a right and due fear, the wise king presupposes a

proper conception of the Lord, whence only that fear can flow, which is the mother of wisdom and understanding; for misconceptions concerning God and his attributes will not produce wisdom, as is manifested in the follies of the heathen world. The proposition therefore amounts to this; *a just notion and conception of God is the beginning of wisdom.* This exposition being deduced from the order and nature of things, let us try the other method, which is more familiar, and see if any exposition will not lead to the same thing. Now we are to consider what is meant by the *fear of the Lord:* the reason of which inquiry arises from our experiencing in ourselves different kinds and degrees of fear, which have different effects and operations. Of what sort then is the fear of the Lord? That it is not an abject slavish fear all expositors agree in, because God is no tyrant; which every man of sense will admit as a good reason: and this is but adjusting the sense of fear from the true notion and conception of God. Scripture mentions various properties of religious fear: *the fear of the Lord is clear,* says the Psalmist: other passages cited, all which being tried in the same way, are deducible only from the notion and conception of God, and are unintelligible without it. The fear of God therefore is not to be expounded from the nature of fear, considered as a distinct passion of the mind, but by considering the natural effect that a just notion of God has on a rational mind; for it means that frame and affection of soul which arises from such a notion: it is so called, because as majesty and power are the principle ingredients in the idea of God, so are fear and reverence in the affection that arises from it; not but that love, honor, and admiration, are included in the notion. And doubtless in this latitude the wise king said, *in the fear of the Lord is strong confidence.* The only appearance of a difficulty in this way of arguing is this: if the fear of God be such as has been stated, none should be void of it but those who want right notions of God; and yet we know it is not so

with some sinners against knowlege. By two ways men may discover whether they have a sense of the fear of God; one by acting agreeably to it, the other by conscience. Self-condemnation, for acting contrary to the fear of God, is an evident token of it. But if neither of these signs be discoverable, there is a farther account to be given; for it is not merely the speculative notions of God which produce this sense, but a persuasion that there is a real Being, to whom these ideas actually belong; else the notion is idle and fruitless: this point enlarged on. And though there be not many atheists in the world, yet in many hearts there is a secret lurking infidelity, or rather the want of a due assurance in the reality of things invisible, which makes religion lifeless and inactive. In this case a just conception of God is wanting, and therefore a due sense of his fear. Having thus considered the true meaning of the fear of God, we are now to consider, II. what is affirmed of it, as the right rule to form our judgments by in matters of religion. *It is the beginning of wisdom;* taking wisdom here to mean true religion, as it often does in Scripture. By this expression we are not to understand merely that the notion of God is, in point of time, or order of nature, prior to religion; which, though true, is not the whole of what is taught concerning the fear of God. All religion relates to God; therefore without the notion of a Deity there can be no religion: but there is religion which is folly and superstition; if therefore the fear of God only shows the necessity of religion, and then leaves us to chance in the variety of its forms, we may learn folly as well as wisdom through it. But the fear of God also teaches us wherein true religion, which is indeed wisdom, consists; and enables us to judge if our offering be fit for God. In natural religion this is clearly the case; because in that state there is no pretence to any other rule that can come into competition with this: it is from the notion of a God that men come to have any sense of religion, and it is by the same principle only that

they determine this to be a proper part of religion, that to be otherwise. When we consider God as governor of the world, we soon see that subjection to him becomes our interest and duty: but what is this obedience, and in what acts does it consist? For this we must recur to our natural notion of God: this point enlarged on. The attributes of God considered, and the consequent duties which they oblige us to perform: though some may be moral duties, as mutual love and benevolence, arising from the relation of man to man on mere principles of reason, yet this becomes part of religion from the above-mentioned consideration of God's nature. Take from the notion of God any of his moral perfections, and religion will degenerate in proportion. Hence to the superstitious man religion becomes a torment, and he thinks that the worse he uses himself, the more he shall please God. There are other kinds of superstition, which, though they have less of torment and anguish, have not more of reason or religion; such are they which have turned religion into a trade, and found something to offer unto God in exchange for virtue and holiness: here the spring is corrupt, and the notion of God lost or not attended to: this point enlarged on. It is plain then, both from reason and fact, that a just conception and sense of God is the beginning of wisdom, the fountain of true religion. *God is a Spirit*, says our Lord, *and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.* Here we are referred to the same principle, and by the best authority. This, it may perhaps be said, may be true on the foot of natural religion, where natural notions alone direct us: but what is it to us, who are instructed by the surer word of prophecy? To this it may be answered, revelation is founded on natural religion, and therefore cannot supersede it without destroying itself. The knowlege of God is in the nature of things antecedent to revelation; for why should we attend to the voice of God, till we know who he is? Hence nothing contrary to this notion of God can be admitted for

revelation any more than for natural religion. There is indeed a difference, from inattention to which some have fancied natural religion opposed to revelation, though it is not so: the difference is this: in natural religion nothing can be admitted which is not deducible from our natural notions; for every thing must be admitted for some reason; and in natural religion no reason can take place, except this agreeableness of the thing to our natural sense: but revelation introduces a new reason, the will of God, which must have the authority of a law with us: this point enlarged on. Hence it is not necessary that all parts of a revelation should be such as may be proved by natural reason, provided they do not contradict it; as the will of God is sufficient reason for our submission. But the essentials of religion, even under revelation, must be judged by the same principle. No revelation can dispense with virtue and holiness; for it may as reasonably dispense with our belief in the being of a God, as that he can or would vacate the obligations to virtue and holiness; hence all such doctrines, rites, and ceremonies, as tend to subvert true goodness and holiness, are clearly not of God's teaching or introducing. The surest way to keep ourselves steadfast in the purity of the gospel, is to fix our eye constantly on this rule: enthusiasm or destructive zeal could not have grown out of the gospel, had men done so; nor could religion have degenerated into folly and superstition: these points enlarged on. Some persons, finding so much folly, superstition, and uncertainty in religion, have rejected it altogether; which could not have happened, had they attended to the true notion of God, and not to the extravagancies of men, which affect not our duty. Are we absolved from our religion because others have corrupted theirs? If the people are deceived, and the priests ignorant or superstitious, that does not destroy the relation between us and God, or make it reasonable for us to throw off our obedience. The fear of God teaches us a very different sort of wisdom.

DISCOURSE LIV.

PROVERBS, CHAP. IX.—VERSE 10.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowlege of the Holy is understanding.

THE advantages which we may expect to reap from religion are many and great, but not all equally certain: some are exposed to the chances and casualties of human life, and depend on circumstances that are not under our own conduct and government: hence it is that the best men are sometimes exposed to the severest trials and sharpest afflictions. But there are two things which sincere religion can never fail of attaining; one of which is the greatest ingredient, nay, the very foundation of all happiness in this world; the other is, the happiness and immortality which wait for us in the world to come: this blessing we can only enjoy now through faith and hope; but the other is present with us, the certain consequence and necessary attendant on a mind truly virtuous and religious; I mean the peace and tranquillity, the ease, and satisfaction of mind, which flow not so much from a sense of our having punctually and exactly discharged our duty in all respects, which is more than ever we may hope for, but from a due sense of God and religion, and the uprightness of our desires and intentions to serve him. This advantage is not, properly speaking, a reward given or bestowed on the virtuous; but it arises from the nature of things, from the frame and contexture of our souls: it is virtue's own child, her natural offspring, and can never leave or forsake her: for as long as men have a sense of virtue and vice, good and evil, so long will they condemn and punish themselves for transgressing their obli-

gations; so long will they find peace and satisfaction in their obedience.

Since then nature has given us notice of the being of the Almighty, and shown us the relation we stand in towards him, and consequently the duty and service which we owe him; it necessarily follows that this sense, rightly adjusted and duly pursued in a regular and honest discharge of our duty towards God, must breed in our minds true peace and comfort; and consequently, that true religion must be the source and spring even of our temporal happiness and enjoyment. But yet look into the world, and the face of things has quite a different appearance: religion is fearful, suspicious, full of doubts and misgivings of heart, never satisfied with itself, always seeking, but seldom finding where to fix itself in rest and tranquillity: hence it comes to pass that some, not rightly considering the nature and causes of things, misconceive concerning religion itself, and think it better to lay aside all pretences to it, than perpetually to fluctuate in the troubled ocean of doubts and uncertainties, that encompasses it round about. And thus superstition, by making many miserable in the pursuit of religion, makes others, to avoid being lost in that gulf, throw themselves into another of atheism and irreligion, which is a much deeper. In these two extremes, of infidelity on one side, and superstition on the other, true religion is lost, and together with it that peace and comfort, and ease of mind, which belong to it: for view God from which of the two extremes you please, his appearance must be dreadful: you may see him in the terrors of majesty and power; but the kinder rays which flow from his mercy and goodness and benevolence towards mankind, will be intercepted from your eyes.

The atheistical unbeliever, if ever he so far forgets himself as to suppose the being of a God for a time, sees nothing of him but the judge and the avenger, and hastens back to his infidelity to screen him from the wrath and justice, which even in imagination were insupportable. Superstition is so perpetually encompassed with a thick cloud of its own fears and suspicions, that it cannot discern the beauties and holiness of the Creator: every frightful spectre, that walks in its own imagination, is

mistaken for the Deity; and superstition adores it, as the wild Indians are said to worship the devil, not for love, but for fear. The case then being thus, that mankind is in a great measure robbed of the present comfort and pleasure of religion, either by infidelity or superstition; it is very well worth our while to search into the causes that lead to this unhappiness, to see what it is that has corrupted this living spring, this fountain of delight, and turned its waters into gall and bitterness.

The words of the text, rightly understood, will not only afford us an occasion for this inquiry, but will also direct us in it; and by showing us the principles of true religion, will help us to discover the errors and misconceits which are introductive of irreligion and superstition.

'The fear of the Lord,' says the wise king, 'is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowlege of the Holy is understanding.' This is not the only place where he expresses himself in this manner: the same thing, with some small variety in the expression, is more than once repeated again in the book of Proverbs: it is to be met with also in the Psalmist, in the very same words almost: and the thought occurs frequently in the inspired writers: so that this seems to be a common maxim or principle of religion, that runs through all the sacred records, and by which all good and wise men have guided themselves in the great and momentous concern of religion.

In speaking to these words, I propose to myself these two things:

First, to show that the text, and other the like passages of holy Scripture, will be found, on examining the sense and reason of them, to contain this general proposition, that a just conception of God, of his excellencies and perfections, is the true foundation of religion.

Secondly, that this just conception of God is the right rule to form our judgments by in all particular matters of religion, and the only thing that can secure us from either atheism or superstition.

First, I will endeavor to show you that the text, and other the like passages of Scripture, will be found, on examining the sense and reason of them, to contain this general proposition,

that a just conception of God, of his excellencies and perfections, is the true foundation of religion; 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.'

To this purpose it might be thought sufficient perhaps by some to observe that fear, whatever limited or enlarged notion you understand it in, is not a voluntary passion: we cannot be afraid or not afraid of things just as we please; but fear necessarily relates to, and arises from, the notion or conception we have of the thing feared: we fear any being in proportion to the power and will which we conceive that being to have either to hurt or to protect us. The different kinds of fear likewise are no otherwise distinguishable from one another, than by considering the different conceptions or ideas of the things feared: for fear, being the necessary effect of such conceptions, must differ according to the difference of the conceptions. If we join to great power great malice and a settled resolution to do mischief, such an object strikes with terror and confusion, and breeds in our minds a base and slavish fear: if we add to great power, great goodness and benevolence, such an object creates an awe and reverence, and fills our hearts with filial fear and veneration. When therefore we say the fear of this or fear of that does so or so, we can have no sense of the proposition, without having a notion of the thing feared. The fear of a tyrant, and the fear of a father, are very different passions: but he that knows not the difference between a tyrant and a father will never be able to distinguish these passions. When therefore we read that 'the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom,' we can have no understanding of the words without having a just conception of God, by which alone we can judge of the nature of godly fear, and of its operations. Allowing therefore that the wise king, by 'the fear of the Lord,' means a right and due fear, it necessarily supposes a right and due conception of the Lord, from which only that right and due fear can flow, which is the mother of wisdom and understanding: for if men misconceive concerning God, either as to his holiness and purity, to his mercy or justice, their fear of him will not produce wisdom; which is evident from the infinite follies of the heathen world, which grew out of their false fear and reverence of their gods. This proposition therefore, 'the fear

of God is the beginning of wisdom,' is equivalent to this, A just notion and conception of God is the beginning of wisdom.

Having deduced this exposition from the order and nature of things in themselves, let us try the other method, which is more familiar, and see whether we can come to any exposition of these words, which will not lead to the same thing.

'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom:' we are to consider what is meant by the 'fear of the Lord.' The reason of the inquiry is evidently this, that we experience in ourselves different kinds and degrees of fear, which have very different effects and operations: some stupify the senses, and rob us of all wisdom and understanding: others render us active and industrious, and give an edge to our invention how to shun and avoid the thing we fear. Of what sort then is the fear of the Lord? Is it an abject slavish fear? No, certainly: all expositors agree to warn you against this sense and interpretation of fear. But were you to ask the reason why the fear of God is not a slavish fear, there is only this reason to be given you, because God is no tyrant; and I suppose every man of sense will admit this for a good reason: and what else is this but adjusting the sense of fear from the true notion and conception of God? The properties of religious fear, which are mentioned in Scripture, are various: 'The fear of the Lord is clean,' says the Psalmist: 'The fear of the Lord is to hate evil,' says Solomon; and again, 'It is a fountain of life;' and again, 'In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence.' Try all these in the same way, and you will find they are deducible only from the notion and conception of God, and are not to be understood without it. The fear of God therefore is not to be expounded from the nature of fear, considered as a distinct passion of the mind; but by considering the natural effect that a just sense and notion of God has on the mind of a rational creature: for the fear of God signifies that frame and affection of soul which is the consequence of a just notion and conception of the Deity. It is called the fear of God, because as majesty and power are the principal parts of the idea of God, so fear and reverence are the main ingredients in the affection that arises from it; not but that love and honor and admiration are included in the notion.

And in this latitude the wise king most certainly understood it, when he said, 'In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence:' for confidence is no effect of fear, properly so called; but it is a natural effect of a just sense of the Almighty's power and goodness.

There is but one thing that occurs to me that seems to look like a difficulty in this way of arguing, which is this: if the fear of God denotes that sense and affection of mind which is the natural effect of a true notion and conception of God, it should seem that none should be void of the fear of God, but those only who want right notions of God; and yet we know there are sinners against knowlege, who discover no fear of God, though they can discourse as rationally as others on his attributes and perfections. There are two ways by which men may discover that they have a sense of the fear of God: one indeed is by acting agreeably to it: but there is another, which is by conscience: self-condemnation, for acting contrary to the fear of God, is an evident token of the sense of that fear. But if there are any instances where neither of these signs are discoverable, there is a farther account to be given; for it is not merely the speculative notions of God which produce this sense, but there must be a persuasion also that there is a real Being to whom these ideas actually belong: without this the notion is idle and fruitless: we may raise in our fancies very terrible objects; but they produce little or no effect, as long as we contemplate them as the mere creatures of our imagination. In like manner the notion of a God may cause little change in the fool's heart, which says there is no God. And though I am far from thinking that there are many atheists in the world, yet there is in many a heart a secret lurking infidelity, or rather a want of a due belief and persuasion of the reality of the things invisible; which makes religion appear so cold and formal, so void of life and activity. Where this is the case, there wants a just conception of God; and no wonder there should want also a due sense of the fear of the Lord. But let us proceed to the second thing, which was to show,

That this just conception of God is the right rule to form our judgments by in matters of religion, and the only thing that can secure us from either atheism or superstition.

Hitherto we have considered the true meaning of the fear of God. We are now to consider what is affirmed of it: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;' taking wisdom here to mean true religion, as it often does in the books of Solomon and in the Psalms of David. When it is said that 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,' you are not to understand merely that the notion of God is, in point of time, or order of nature, prior to religion; which, though it be true, yet is it not the whole of what is taught concerning the fear of God. All religion, indeed, has a relation to God; and therefore without the sense and notion of a Deity there can be no religion: but there is religion which is folly and superstition, that better suits with any name than that of wisdom: and therefore, if the fear of God does only in general show us the necessity of religion, and does then leave us to take our chance in the great variety of forms and institutions that are to be found in the world, it may be our hap to learn folly as well as wisdom, on the instigation of this principle. But in truth, the fear of God does not only show us the necessity of religion, but likewise teaches us wherein true religion, which is indeed wisdom, does consist; and enables us to judge of our offering, whether it be fit to be laid before the Almighty.

In natural religion this is evidently the case; because in that state there is no pretence to any other rule that can come in competition with this. It is from the notion of a God that men come to have any sense of religion; and it is by the same principle only that they determine this to be a proper part of religion, that to be otherwise. When we consider God as Lord and Governor of the world, we soon perceive ourselves to be in subjection, and that we stand obliged, both in interest and duty, to pay obedience to the Supreme. But what is this obedience? and in what acts does it consist? For this we must recur to our natural notion of God. If we conceive him to be holy, pure, and just, we must necessarily judge that he will be pleased with no service but what is agreeable to holiness, purity, and justice: if we conceive him to be a Being good and merciful, a common Father to mankind, whose love is without partiality, and equal to all his creatures, we must, on this view, conclude that religion binds us not to be hurtful or injurious to any of the

sons of men; because it is a contradiction to think that we are bound to serve and obey God, and yet at liberty to injure and abuse those whom he most affectionately loves. Mutual love and benevolence may be a moral duty, arising from the relation of man to man, on mere principles of reason, exclusive of religion; but it becomes part of our religion from such consideration of God's nature as I have just now mentioned. Take from the notion of God any of the moral perfections that belong to it, and you will find such alteration must influence religion likewise, which will degenerate in the same proportion as the notion of God is corrupted. The superstitious man, viewing God through the false perspectives of fear and suspicion, loses sight of his goodness, and sees only a dreadful spectre made up of anger and revenge; hence religion becomes his torment, and he thinks the worse he uses himself, the more he shall please God; and the best service he can pay, is that which renders him most miserable.

There are other kinds of superstition, which, though they have less of torment and anguish, have not more of reason or religion: such are they which have turned religion into a trade, and found something to offer God in exchange for virtue and holiness. In all these cases the spring is corrupted, the notion of God is lost, or not attended to: what notion has that man of God, who thinks that washing his hands three or four times a day is a part of religion; who imagines that penances and pilgrimages, or any thing else, is equivalent to virtue and holiness? Search your notion of God; consider his holiness and purity, and see what you can find to make you think that beating yourself, or washing yourself, or parting with your money, will please him like virtue and holiness. These must appear to be absurd follies to any man who will attend to this principle. In the heathen world, some happily discovered some glimmerings of the true holiness and perfections of God, and were to maintain virtue on the foot of religion: others perhaps were much better men than their principles of religion led them to be. The natural sense of good and evil, and the relation of man to man, led some generous spirits into the right way. But in this case goodness was not the effect of religion, but of a

rational nature: it was a political or sociable virtue, but not a religious one.

It is plain then, both from reason and fact, that a just conception and sense of God is the beginning of wisdom, the fountain from which true religion flows: by this it is that you may distinguish between true and false religion, since that only is true religion which is agreeable to the nature of God. 'God is a spirit,' says our blessed Lord, 'and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' Here you are referred to the same principle, and by the best authority: you see here our Lord himself inferring the nature of worship from the nature of God.

This may be true, perhaps you will say, on the foot of natural religion, where we have nothing but natural notions to direct us: but what is it to us, who have the surer word of prophecy to guide and instruct us? In answer to this I would observe that natural religion is the foundation on which revelation stands; and therefore revelation can never supersede natural religion without destroying itself. The knowlege of God is, in the nature of things, antecedent to revelation; for there can be no reason for attending to the voice of God till we know who God is. The natural notion of God then is the foundation of revelation, as well as of natural religion; and consequently, nothing contrary to this notion can be admitted for revelation, any more than for natural religion.

There is indeed a difference, which ought always to be remembered, and for want of which some have imagined they have discovered great opposition between natural religion and revelation, where in truth there is none. The difference is this: in natural religion nothing can be admitted that may not be proved and deduced from our natural notions; for every thing must be admitted for some reason; and in natural religion no reason can take place, but this agreeableness of the thing to our natural sense: but in revelation it is otherwise: for revelation introduces a new reason, the will of God, which has, and ought to have, the authority of a law with us. Nor is it plain, from any natural principle, that God cannot enlarge our duty, or oblige us to any thing but what nature has already obliged us

to: it is certain he cannot contradict his own nature; and therefore he can teach us nothing contrary to the natural sense he has given us of himself: but as he has authority to give us laws, he may add to our duty and obligations as he sees fit. And therefore it is not necessary all parts of a revelation should be such as may be proved by natural reason: it is sufficient that they do not contradict it; for the will of God is a sufficient reason for our submission.

But however, the essentials of religion, even under revelation, must be tried and judged by the same principle. No revelation can dispense with virtue and holiness; for it may as reasonably dispense with our believing the being of a God, as with our believing that he can or would vacate the obligations to virtue and holiness: for to remove God out of the world, and to change the essential properties of his nature, is one and the same thing. We may be sure then that all such doctrines, all such rites and ceremonies, as tend to subvert true goodness and holiness, are not of God's teaching or introducing.

Nor is there, I believe, a more certain way to keep ourselves steadfastly in the purity of the gospel, than by keeping our eye constantly on this rule. Could enthusiasm or destructive zeal, ever have grown out of the gospel, had men compared their practices with the natural sense they have of God? Would they not have seen that to defend even religion by cruelty and bloodshed must be hateful in the sight of God? Could religion ever have degenerated into such folly and superstition, as in some places it has done, had the true notions of God been preserved, and all religious actions examined by it?

On the other hand, some there are who, taking religion to be what it appears to be in the world, find so much folly, and superstition, and uncertainty in it, that they have chosen, as the safer way, to reject all religion: but could men have judged thus perversely, had they attended to the true rule, and formed their notions of religion from the nature and wisdom of God, and not from the follies and extravagancies of men? How does the folly and perverseness of others affect your duty to God? or how came you absolved from all religion, because others have corrupted theirs? Suppose the people deceived,

and the priests either ignorant or superstitious; what then? Does the error of one, or the ignorance of the other, destroy the relation between you and God, and make it reasonable for you to throw off all obedience? The fear of God will teach you another sort of wisdom. This therefore you ought to cultivate and improve, and preserve free from error or corruption, as your surest guide in all doubts, and as the true principle of religious wisdom.

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE LV.

LUKE, CHAP. X.—VERSE 29.

PART I.

THE precepts of the law and of the gospel being conceived in general terms, and familiarly expressed, men of speculative minds have so restricted the application of this general rule, that the duty has often been lost in the explication, and the precept so pared and cut, that it is no longer serviceable to common life. The law of God, *to love our neighbor as ourselves*, can be better interpreted by our hearts than our heads; as we cannot help feeling the sense of our duty as long as we attend to the inward motions of nature: our own wants and infirmities will show us the matter and extent of our obedience: but when men come to limit the exact bounds of love, it generally happens that very little love remains to be disposed of among their neighbors, and very few to share what they have. This exemplified in the case of a covetous man making excuses why he should not bestow his charity on some poor wretch; and so every instance of our duty has its subterfuges: as long as men find comfort in excuses, invention will furnish them. It may seem strange that the laws of God should be liable to this usage; since being the transcript of perfect knowlege, and the work of him who knows and foresees the secrets of all hearts, we might have expected to find them so fenced about, and so express in all cases, that the meaning of the precept could not be questioned, or iniquity covered by excuses drawn from the interpretation of Scripture: but there are good rea-

sons for this. Were the Scripture to consider all cases, and limit our duties in all possible circumstances, the world itself could hardly contain the things that should be written: such a law would be useless, and men might grow old in sin before they could learn their duty. Besides, God gave every man a law to direct him, when he made him a reasonable creature; and therefore he expects obedience to it. The gospel was given not to exclude, but to assist the exercise of reason; and therefore a law so circumstantial would preclude men from those nobler instances of duty which flow from a right use of their minds, and are the proper sacrifice of a rational soul to God. The uprightness of a man, and the integrity of his mind, are as discernible in his application of the rules of the gospel, as by any outward acts whatever. He who from his own reason nobly interprets the word neighbor in the gospel to be all the sons of men, is so much a better Christian than the man who confines the law to townsmen or countrymen, as his neighborhood is more universal. Besides a law so particular would not correct the evil complained of: the perverseness of the will, not the weakness of the understanding, teaches the evasions of the law: were it more explicit, men would take more pains to evade it; for the plainness of the law will but little correct the malignity of the will, which alone needs improvement: this point enlarged on. Since therefore it is impracticable to give rules for all cases, and to adjust the general laws of virtue and obedience to the various circumstances of human life, without destroying the end of all laws which are intended for rules; but which, by taking in all particular cases, would grow too voluminous for use;—since reason and judgment would be of no use in virtue and obedience, if men in all cases were limited by particular clauses and provisions;—since likewise the end to be gained by such numerous and particular laws would not be attained, but men would still find room to cavil at their duty, and pretences to evade it;—it appears that the gospel is not to

be charged with the doubts and disputes that often arise on its laws and precepts, itself being perfect as a law for the government and instruction of rational creatures; but we must seek elsewhere the cause of men differing so widely on the plainest points of duty. A careful attention to the text will show this; and the parable which our Saviour put forth, instead of an answer to the lawyer's question, will point out the remedy. Interpreters differ about the meaning of the words, *but he, willing to justify himself, said;* as it does not appear why he needed any justification for himself: no one had charged him with any neglect or contempt of the law. Nay, our Lord had commended his wise answer, *And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right; This do, and thou shalt live.* Then follows our text. Nor does it appear how any justification of himself could arise out of this question, or the answer that might be given to it: what fault did he mean to excuse by asking, *who is my neighbor?* How did his virtue or innocence depend on the answer that might be given him? These difficulties have led interpreters into different sentiments; these being omitted, the most easy and natural exposition of the passage is proposed. This lawyer came to our Lord, and tempting him said, *what shall I do to inherit eternal life?* Our Lord answered, *what readest thou?* He said, that in the law he found he was to *love the Lord his God with all his might, and his neighbor as himself:* our Saviour says unto him, *thou hast answered right*, and adds, *this do*, that is, practise the law as well as thou seemest to understand it, *and thou shalt live.* But in the practice, the lawyer knew how this precept had been loaded with exceptions and limitations by the Jewish doctors; and that he esteemed him only as his neighbor, who was of the same blood and religion with himself; he therefore hated many who were actually his neighbors, as the Samaritans for instance. Since then he heard that life eternal depended on his obedience to the law, and the propriety of his obedience rested on the Jewish inter-

pretation of it; in order to his own justification he very properly asks our Lord, *and who is my neighbor?* for by the answer to this question he would be found to have fulfilled or transgressed the commandment. Had our Lord determined in favor of the Jewish interpretation, the lawyer had been justified in his practice; and his obedience, as well as his previous prudent answer, would have deserved praise: but being forced to own that the *Samaritan* was his neighbor, he stood condemned by his own sentence, and by his approbation of the Samaritan's example; and he was sent away with this short but full report and admonition; *go, and do thou likewise.* The words, thus expounded, show us on what motives men act, and what it is which prejudices their minds in interpreting God's law: they are *willing to justify themselves,* and therefore use all their force and skill to make the command countenance their practice, and to speak only consistently with their inclinations. When we do what is commanded, and forbear from what is forbidden, then is our obedience perfect: this plain description of obedience cannot be disputed. He that loves not his duty, is restless, and labors to bend the law, that it may justify him in his proceedings. It is no wonder, when men are so engaged in errors either of practice or doctrine, that they should labor to reconcile themselves with the commands of God's law; for great as is the pleasure of sin, they cannot of themselves bear up against a guilty conscience. While the pleasure is new and in its full vigor, or the gain increasing, the mind wants perhaps no other comfort: but the pleasures of vice have their intermission, and are succeeded by cold damps, which seize on the spirits: this point enlarged on, and illustrated by the case of ill-gotten wealth. It is in the intervals of reflexion that a man frames devices how to escape the dreaded punishment, and convinces himself that he has not offended against the law of God, but of the interpreters, who love to lay heavy burdens on others, which they care not to touch with one finger: thus the easy

casuist comes to enjoy and justify his iniquity. When the young man inquired on what terms he might inherit eternal life, our Lord set the commands before him, (Mark x. 19.): thus far all was well: these terms he willingly accepted. Our Lord, delighted with his towardly disposition, would have led him on to greater perfection, (ver. 21.): but this the young man could by no means digest, (ver. 22.) for he was exceeding rich: how gladly would he have had the precept softened! how would he have adored a teacher who could have made him a consistent title both to heaven and to his estate! In this instance we see the disposition which makes men strive to render the law of God of a piece with their own affections: in others we shall see the practice. The Jews had a law, commanding that they should honor their father and their mother; which implied an obligation on children to support their indigent parents; a precept so just and reasonable, that it is one of the prime laws of nature; but the Jews, hardhearted to their own flesh and blood, were uneasy under this burden; and yet the law was plain: and they could not rest till they made the law comply; and they set up tradition against it, to dissolve its uneasy obligations: for they taught as our Saviour justly reproves them, (Mark vii. 11-13.) Thus the law was to be supplanted, to justify its open violation. But to come nearer home: the Scripture expressly commands us to worship the Lord, and him only; and he has declared himself a jealous God in this respect. Two of the commandments, and all parts of the gospel, confirm this article; yet it has been controverted even by Christians more than any other. Were not the case notorious, it might be said, perhaps, how is this possible? whence such misunderstanding of the Scriptures? Whence these interpretations? It was not a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of Scripture that led to this: corrupt practices first got possession; and men, *willing to justify themselves*, coined new interpretations: the violence of this inclination may be

seen from its beating down such express and repeated commands of God. There is no man living, who has heard or read the gospel, but he believes that all image or creature worship is forbidden, those only excepted who are practising it. Could the Jews give themselves leave to charge such doctrines on the gospel as some Christians pretend to find in it, they neither would desire, nor could have better arguments for rejecting it. Prayer, praise, and adoration of God, are things difficult to none but scholars: they are in themselves plain; but refined notions, to justify modern corruptions, have made them intricate. The command is clear, God only is to be worshipped: to make room for any other object, worship is to be split into many kinds, and one religiously preserved to God, in controversy at least, that others may be imparted to the creature. To this eagerness of justifying a corrupt practice, we owe the many curious distinctions invented to darken and confound the clearest truths of the gospel.

PART II.

It is a common practice, though much complained of, to pervert the Scriptures to support the opinions which distinguish different sects; and this, in proportion as each has departed from the genuine doctrines and practices of Christianity. The same disposition exists in private life: there are not so many self-condemned sinners in the world as is generally thought; for he who continues in sin generally finds out soon some excuse or justification for *his* vice. A man, judging only by reason and Scripture, would wonder how Scripture was ever made a party to such a defence: but the friends of any vice are guided in their judgments by self-love and interest, such candid interpreters, that no vice need fear being tried by the Scriptures, they being judges. The cause of this has been already observed: it is now considered how we may best secure our-

selves against this great abuse. The words of the text do not lead directly to this inquiry, or afford much light in it: but by observing how our Lord brought this disputer to do justice to the law of God, and to own even the Samaritan as the Jew's neighbor, we shall learn how men are to be dealt with; and how forced to give up the excuses under which they have sheltered their iniquity. As what is farther to be said in this argument must arise from our Lord's answer to the question put to him in the text, his answer must be placed in its true light. In answer then to the lawyer's question, our Lord puts a case to him for his own judgment: the story briefly related. Some have labored much so to adjust this case, that it might be a proper answer to the lawyer's question, *who is my neighbor?* that is, whom must I love as myself? So that our Lord ought to have determined the extent and right of neighborhood, and thence deduced the obligations of love and assistance; whereas the case reverses this order: the Priest and the Levite were not neighbors, because they did not assist the wounded man; the Samaritan was, because he showed kindness to him: if then no man is our neighbor till we have either showed or received kindness from him, we cannot from the right of neighborhood infer the obligations of love, but must determine, from the mutual exercise of love, the notion and extent of neighborhood: and no man, if this be the case, can offend against the law of loving his neighbor: for none being our neighbors except those we love, every man loves his neighbors. But if we view the case fairly and in its true light, this supposed difficulty vanishes. The lawyer asked the question in order to justify himself: he had learned to call no man neighbor who was not of the same stock and religion with himself: he expressly hated Samaritans, and justified his hatred, because they were deserters of the temple at Jerusalem. This great error was not to be wrested from him by battling his prejudices, and arguing on the true sense of the law; for not being unaccustomed to such exer

cise, he would have stood resolute against any such convictions; our Saviour therefore puts him a case which shuts out all his prejudices. By placing a *Jew* in distress, no exception could be taken against the person: a Samaritan in the same state would have found no pity from a Jew, who would have thought it right to be an enemy to the enemy of God. A priest and a Levite pass by and neglect him: these persons stood in all those relations to the distressed, which the lawyer owned to be just bonds of neighborhood, and therefore he could not but condemn their want of bowels to their brother; but a Samaritan passing by, shows compassion to the poor Jew: here even the lawyer's prejudices carried him to a right judgment; for knowing the hatred between the Jew and the Samaritan, he could not but the more admire his kindness: hence our Saviour urges him to declare which was neighbor to the man in distress; that is, which acted most agreeably to God's law, that we should *love our neighbor as ourself:* the lawyer answers, *he that showed mercy;* condemning thereby the Jewish exposition and his own prejudices; for if a Jew was forbidden to assist a Samaritan, the same reason held good why a Samaritan should not assist a Jew. Our Saviour approving his judgment bids him apply it to himself; *go thou, and do likewise;* that is, since you commend the Samaritan for acting like a neighbor to the Jew, do you learn to act so to a *Samaritan,* which is the force of the word *likewise.* Thus the case fully determined the question, and showed that no restrictions were to be laid on the law of God. From our Lord's conduct here, we may learn how to apply to the passions and prejudices of men; and how most successfully to make truth occupy the seat of error. If it were a defect of reason that made us thus disagree, and act differently in cases where we have one and the same rule to go by, the distemper would be incurable, as we are not able to enlarge the faculties which are bounded by God and nature. But it is not so; passion and prejudice hinder us from judging

rightly in cases of morality and natural justice; and we find that men's reason and judgment fail in the very same proportion that vice and passion prevail. Did men judge perversely in all cases alike, nothing less than want of judgment and reason could account for it: but when we see them to have reason in most cases, and to be dark only in a few, we must search out some other cause. Now if we find that a man's reason and virtue forsake him in the same instances, and that where he judges perversely he acts perversely, and remarkably so in them only, we may learn what misguides or rather enslaves the mind, and how the freedom of reason may be restored: this beautifully illustrated in the cases of the covetous, voluptuous, and ambitious man: *self* lies at the bottom; it is not so much the vice, as *self* that is to be defended; and if you can separate these, the vice will soon fall under the common sentence of reason, and be left to be condemned with its fellows. By this honest, this holy art, did our Lord convince the lawyer, who put the question of the text to him, intending to admit no one as his neighbor that was not nearly allied to him, or at least of the same nation. Our Saviour stated a case to him by which his prejudices were silenced: thus he who excluded almost all mankind, owned even the *Samaritan* to be the Jew's neighbor, and thus confessed the *Samaritan's* right, in that relation, to expect and receive good offices from the *Jew*. Thus also did the prophet Nathan force David, in the very height of sin and extravagance, to give sentence on himself and his iniquity. The story of Uriah briefly told. Had the prophet openly taxed David with the murder, he would perhaps have justified himself, and said to the prophet as he had to the captain, *the sword devoureth one as well as another*; or perhaps the prophet would have been rebuked for his intrusion, and forced to fly from the king's anger. But he complains to the king of a great oppression, which a very rich man had been guilty of towards a very poor one. The

story of the ewe-lamb fully told. Then said the king, *as the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die.* The king having thus passed sentence, the prophet opened the secret, and said, *thou art the man:* the parallel fully drawn. The king therefore had no retreat for his justification: he had nothing left him but this plain confession, *I have sinned against the Lord.* Thus again our Saviour, under the parable of an householder and his vineyard, made the Jews bear witness to God's justice in rejecting their nation from being his people: this parable briefly related. It is not hard to force truth out of men, when you have once got beyond their prejudices, and separated the truth from all personal views and interests; for reason is clear enough, when unclouded by passion and affection: this made the heathen moralists clothe their instructions in the dress of fable: the reasons of this enlarged on, and illustrated in the case of a passionate man, who never reads the fable of the horse and the man, but he laughs at the horse's folly and his impotent desire of revenge. The consequences of these things are plain. I. The true art of convincing a man of his error is plainly to throw him as much as possible out of the case; for the less he is himself concerned, the better he judges. You must not fret his prejudices, but decline them; not reproach him with the error you condemn, but place it so that he may see it in its true light. II. In private life, innocence is the only preservative of reason and judgment: guilt causes you to seek subterfuges, and misleads you in your opinion of yourself and your duty. III. If you find yourself involved in the case you are to judge of, instead of seeking new reasons and arguments to form your opinion by, look back and reflect what sense you had of the matter before it was your own; as your judgment will thus be more impartial: or consider, if possible, what is the sense of the sober and virtuous, whom you may more safely trust than yourself, where your passions are

concerned. At least suppose your enemy in the same circumstances with yourself; change places with him; then consider what judgment you would make of him, and so judge of yourself. By these means perhaps we may preserve ourselves from the fatal influences which vice and passion have over the reason and understanding of mankind.

DISCOURSE LV.

LUKE, CHAP. X.—VERSE 29.

But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?

PART I.

THE precepts of the law and of the gospel being conceived in general terms, and expressed in the most easy and familiar manner, men of speculative minds, whose business is rather inquiry than practice, have taken so much pains to adjust the limitations and restrictions which they conceive to be applicable to the general rule, that in many cases the duty has been lost in the explication; and the precept has been so pared and cut to the quick by exceptions, that it is no longer of any use or service in common life.

The law of God commands us 'to love our neighbor as ourselves;' the interpretation of which will better come from our hearts than our heads; for we cannot help feeling the sense of our duty as long as we attend to the motions of nature within ourselves: our own wants and infirmities will show us the matter and the extent of our obedience; and self-love will direct us in the practice and execution: but when men come to speculate on the point, and to define the exact bounds of love, and to determine nicely how far the notion of neighborhood is to be extended, the event too commonly is, that there is but very little love left to be disposed of among our neighbors, and that it may the better hold out, but very few neighbors left to share in our love. Call a covetous man to the exercise of this duty in an instance of charity; show him a man oppressed with poverty and hunger, clothed in rags, and destitute

of all the comforts and supports of life, and bid him love this poor wretch as himself: he will tell you, perhaps, the law is excellent and good, and he does love the man, and pities his misfortunes; but he has nothing to spare: he is not obliged to love another better than himself; and therefore it is unreasonable to expect that he should straiten and pinch himself to enlarge the conveniences of others: he grudges him no degree of love, and heartily wishes him at ease and in plenty; but cannot afford any thing towards it out of his little. Or perhaps he will question on what title this man pretends to be his neighbor: he is sure he never saw him before, nor ever heard that he lived near him; and if every body that will may claim to be his neighbor, there will be no end of it; and he may soon give his neighbors all he has, if every one that begs must be his neighbor. There is room in all other instances of our duty for the like subterfuges; and as long as men find comfort in such excuses for their negligence and disobedience, they will never want invention to furnish them.

It may seem strange perhaps that the laws of God should be liable to this usage: since being the transcript of perfect wisdom, and the work of him who not only knows, but foresees the secrets of all hearts, we might expect to find them so guarded and fenced about, and made so plain and express in all cases, that it should have been in no man's power to question the sense or meaning of the precept, or to cover his iniquity with the least umbrage of an excuse drawn from the interpretation of holy Scripture: but there are very good reasons to be given why the law of God is not so explicit and particular. Were the Scripture to descend into the consideration of all cases, and to state the exact bounds of our duty in all possible circumstances of life, we might say perhaps, without being much beholden to a figure of speech, that the world itself could not contain the things that should be written. A law extending itself to such variety of cases and circumstances would be altogether useless, and men might grow old in sin and iniquity before they could possibly learn their duty, or extract the rules proper for their own use, out of the infinite variety of laws, many of which have no respect to them or their circumstances.

Besides, God gave every man a law to direct him, when he made him a reasonable creature, and expects obedience in virtue of that law of nature. The gospel was given not to exclude, but to assist the exercise of reason: and therefore to require a law so exact and circumstantial, that there should be no room for the use or obedience of reason, is to preclude men from those nobler instances of duty which flow from the right use of their minds, and which are the proper sacrifice offered by a rational soul to God. The uprightness of a man, and the integrity of his mind, are as discernible in his application of the rules of the gospel, as by any outward acts whatever. A man who reads in the gospel that he ought to love his neighbor as himself, and from his own sense and reason supplies the law with this noble comment, that all the sons of men are his neighbors, is as much a better Christian than the man who extends the law only to his townsmen or his countrymen, as his neighborhood is more universal.

Farther, a law descending to every particular case would be of no manner of service in correcting the evil complained of: it is the perverseness of the will, and not the weakness of the understanding, that teaches men the evasions of the law: were the law more explicit, they would only take more pains to get rid of its obligations; for the plainness of the law will do but little in correcting the malignity of the will, which yet is the only thing that stands in need of an improvement. The command of loving our neighbor is so far from wanting to be enlarged, that I believe there is no right good Christian who thinks any mortal excluded from the benefit of it as it now stands: to what purpose then should it be enlarged? Were it expressed in never so general terms, it might still be misunderstood or perverted by such as obstinately refuse to see. Suppose the law conceived in the fullest terms, and that it were said that every man in the world is to be esteemed our neighbor, and has a right to our love and assistance, and that it is our duty to do him good; and were this law, so expressed, to be made the standing rule of the courts of inquisition, what would the world be the better for it? For as long as they will maintain that the greatest good they can do their brother is, in order to reform his supposed errors in religion, to whip him and torment him, to

sequester his goods and estate, or to deliver him over to the fire, the more universal their rule is, the worse it must fare with all the world: and whilst they have such notions of doing good, the only thing to be wished for is, that they might think it their duty to hate all mankind.

Since therefore it is impracticable to give rules and directions for all possible cases, and to adjust the general laws of virtue and obedience to the great variety of circumstances incident to human life, without destroying the end of all laws, which are intended for directions and rules; but were they to take in all particular cases, would soon grow too voluminous to be serviceable; there being no life long enough, no industry sufficient for such a study, and no memory strong enough to retain such a body of institutes: since reason and judgment would be of no farther use in virtue and obedience, were men in all cases limited by particular clauses and provisions; because it would be great presumption for men to exercise their reason and their judgment in order to govern and direct themselves, were the law of God so express and particular in all cases, as to exclude farther inquiry; by which means the noblest instance of virtue, which is shown in the free choice that reason makes of what is good and amiable, guided by the general directions of God's law, would be oftentimes lost and impracticable: since likewise the end proposed to be served by such numerous and particular laws would not be obtained; but men would still find room to cavil at their duty, and be able to furnish pretences to evade it, as is evident from this plain reason, that it is not want of knowlege but of will to obey, which makes men wrest and torture the law of God: had they therefore more light from the most express directions, yet still their disinclination to virtue would be the same, and produce the same ill effects; and, consequently, were the laws of the gospel ever so much enlarged, the same difficulties would remain, as long as the same perverseness of will continues among men: from these considerations, I say, it does appear that the gospel is not to be charged with the doubts and disputes which often arise on the laws and precepts delivered in it, the gospel having all the perfection requisite in a law designed for the government and instruction of rational creatures; but we must look out elsewhere to find the cause

that may give us a satisfactory account why men so often and so widely differ on the plainest points of duty, and whence the difficulties and scruples grow, which perplex even the clearest precepts of Christian morality.

The text, if carefully attended to, will discover to us the cause to which this evil owes its growth and increase; and the parable which our Saviour put forth, instead of a direct answer to the lawyer's question, will teach us where to seek and find the remedy.

Interpreters are not agreed in the meaning of the former part of the text, 'But he, willing to justify himself, said;' for it does not appear what occasion he had for any justification of himself: no accusation had been brought against him; nobody had charged him with any neglect or contempt of the law: so far otherwise, that our Lord had commended his wise answer, and promised him life if he obeyed the terms which he himself had proposed: 'And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right; This do, and thou shalt live:' on which immediately follow the words of the text, 'But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, and who is my neighbor?' Besides, it does not presently appear how any justification of himself could arise out of this question, or any answer that might be given to it. What fault did he mean to excuse by asking, 'Who is my neighbor?' or how did his virtue or innocence depend on the answer that should be returned to this inquiry? These difficulties, I say, have led interpreters into different sentiments: but without examining their opinions, I shall propose to you one that seems to be the true, because the most easy and natural exposition of the place.

This lawyer came to our Lord, and tempting him, said, 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Our Lord returns him to the law for an answer to his question, saying, 'What readest thou?' He readily answered, that in the law he found that he was to 'love the Lord his God with all his might, and his neighbor as himself.' This account our Saviour approves, and says unto him, 'Thou hast answered right;' and adds, that if he would practise the law as well as he seemed to understand it, he was in no danger: 'This do, and thou shalt live.' But in this part, relating to practice, the lawyer well knew how

this precept in particular, of loving our neighbors, had been loaded with exceptions and limitations by the Jewish doctors, and that he had never esteemed any body to be his neighbor who was not of the same blood, and who did not profess the same religion with himself; for which reason he hated many, who, according to the letter, were his neighbors, as the Samaritans were, who dwelt very near, but were the aversion of every Jew, being esteemed as the corrupters of the faith and true religion. Since therefore life eternal depended on his obedience to the law, as he had heard from our Saviour; and since whether his obedience were such as it ought to be, depended wholly on the Jewish interpretation of the law, and could no otherwise be maintained than by excluding from the rights and privileges of neighborhood all who were not of the stock and faith of Israel; in order therefore to his own justification he very properly puts the question to our Lord, 'And who is my neighbor?' for as this question should be resolved, he would be found either to have fulfilled or transgressed the commandment. Had our Lord determined in favor of the Jewish interpretation, and told him that those only were his neighbors who were of the same stock and family, and who worshipped God in the same manner that he did, the lawyer had been justified in his practice, and his obedience might have deserved commendation, as well as his prudent answer out of the law had done before: but when our Saviour had forced him into a confession that even the Samaritan was his neighbor, he stood condemned by his own sentence, and by the example of the Samaritan which he had approved, and was sent away with this short but full reproof and admonition: 'Go, and do thou likewise.'

The words thus expounded show us on what motives men act, and what it is that prejudices their minds in the interpretation of God's law: they are 'willing to justify themselves;' and therefore employ all their force and skill to make the command countenance their practice, and to speak such language only as may be consistent with their inclinations. When our actions are such as the law enjoins, when we do what is commanded, and forbear what is forbidden, then is our obedience perfect. This is so plain a description of obedience, with respect to the law which is to be obeyed, that it cannot be

disputed. A truly virtuous man endeavors to bend all his passions and inclinations towards the command, and to make them intirely submissive to it. The man who loves not his duty is often uneasy and restless under the pain of self-condemnation; and knowing that all would be well, did but his actions and the law agree, he labors to bend the law towards his inclinations, that it may justify him in all his doings, and yield him the pleasure and satisfaction of thinking himself righteous.

It is no great wonder, when men are so deeply engaged in any error either of practice or doctrine, that they should labor to reconcile themselves as far as possible with the commands and injunctions of God's law; for as great as the pleasure of sin is, as large as the profit of iniquity often is, they cannot of themselves sustain the spirit of a man against the girds and lashes of a guilty conscience. Whilst the pleasure is new and in its full vigor; whilst the gain is counting over and treasuring up, the mind perhaps, lost in the present enjoyment, may want no other comfort: but the pleasures of vice have their intermission, and are succeeded by cold damps, which seize the spirits. The gains of iniquity are not always pouring themselves in: when the ill-gotten wealth is bagged up, there will be spare time more than enough for a man to ask himself how he got these mighty riches. In these seasons of reflexion, in these intervals of thought and reason, the soul wants other comforts than such as can arise from pleasures that are past, or from treasures that are hidden in the earth. A man can never long like a bargain which he really thinks he shall suffer for hereafter: and therefore, to quiet and ease himself, he frames many devices how to escape the punishment he dreads: being easy to be persuaded, he soon convinces himself that the laws of God have been too rigorously expounded, and pressed too far; that, in truth, he has not offended against the law of God, but only against the cruel law of the interpreters, whose pleasure it is to lay heavy burdens on other men's shoulders, which themselves care not to touch with one of their fingers. By these means the easy casuist comes to such a temper with himself, that he can at once enjoy and justify his iniquity.

When the young man in the gospel came to our Lord, inquiring on what terms he might inherit eternal life, our Lord

set the commands before him: 'Do not commit adultery: Do not kill: Do not steal: Do not bear false witness: Honor thy father and thy mother.' Thus far all was well: these terms he willingly accepted; for he had been virtuously bred, and had observed these things from his youth; and having no guilt to justify, he had no exceptions to make to the commandments. Our Lord, delighted with his towardly disposition, would have led him on to greater perfection: 'Yet lackest thou,' says he, 'one thing: Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me.' The young man, who had not committed adultery, nor been guilty of theft or disobedience to his parents, and therefore had no fault to find with the former laws, had, it seems, a great estate, and therefore could by no means digest this: 'but was exceeding sorrowful, for he was very rich:' sorrowful, not because he was rich, for then he might easily have complied, and eased his sorrow; but sorrowful to find any thing in the gospel inconsistent with his riches. How gladly would he have listened to any softenings of this precept! How would he have adored a teacher who would have made him a consistent title to heaven and his estate! In this instance you see the disposition which makes men strive with the law of God, and labor to render it of a piece with their own affections: in others we will show you the practice.

The Jews had a law, commanding that they should honor their father and their mother; which implied an obligation on children to support and maintain their indigent parents; a precept in itself so just and reasonable, that it is one of the prime laws of nature: but the Jews, who were hard-hearted to their own flesh and blood, were uneasy under this burden; and yet the law was plain; and they could not be satisfied till they had made the law comply; and therefore they set up tradition against the express law, and found a way to dissolve the uneasy obligations: for thus they taught, as our Saviour justly reproves them; 'If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall be free: and ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or mother, making the word of God of none effect through your

tradition.' The law was to be supplanted, you see, to justify the open breach and violation of it.

But to come nearer our own times, and to still plainer instances: you know in how many places the Scripture expressly forbids us to pay any worship or service to any creature; but, that we should worship and serve the Lord, and him only. In this respect God has declared himself to be a jealous God, and that he will not give his honor to another. Of the Ten Commandments, two are spent in securing this fundamental point of true religion; and the gospel has, not only in many, but in all its parts, confirmed this great article. Notwithstanding all this care, it is well known that no point of doctrine or practice has been more controverted, even among Christians, than this very article. Were the case less notorious than it is, you would say, perhaps, How is this possible? How could it enter into any man's head so to misunderstand the Scriptures? What could lead to such interpretations? That they are so interpreted is very plain; and the account that may be given why they are so is as plain also. It was not misunderstanding or misinterpreting the Scriptures that led to the corruptions in practice: but the corrupt practices first got possession; and men, 'willing to justify themselves,' coined new interpretations of Scripture to support their new practices: and how violent the inclination to justify themselves is may be easily understood, when we see it beat down such express, such plain, such often-repeated injunctions of the word of God. There is not, I believe, one man, whether Christian, Jew, or Pagan, who has ever heard or read the gospel, but thinks that all image worship, all creature worship, is absolutely forbidden in it, those only excepted who are involved in the practice. Could the Jews give themselves leave to reproach the gospel with such doctrines as some Christians pretend to maintain out of it, they would desire no better arguments for their rejecting it; nor could they indeed have better. To serve and to worship God in prayer, and praise, and humble adoration, are things hard to be understood to none but scholars; in themselves they are plain; but the notions have been so refined, in order to justify modern corruptions, that they are become intricate. The com-

mand is plain, that God only is to be worshipped: how then must room be made for worshipping any other? In order to this, worship is to be split into many kinds, and one most religiously preserved to God, in controversy at least, that the others may the more freely be imparted to the creature. To this eagerness of justifying a corrupt practice, we owe the many curious distinctions that have been invented to darken and confound the clearest truths of the gospel.

DISCOURSE LV.

PART II.

THERE is nothing more complained of, and yet nothing more commonly practised among all parties, than the perverting the holy Scriptures to support and maintain the opinions and doctrines which are the distinguishing marks and characters of different communions. This holds true of all sects, in proportion as they have departed from the genuine doctrines and practices of Christianity: for all sects equally labor to maintain their tenets, and more or less pervert the Scripture, as they have more or less gone astray from it.

The same disposition is perpetually showing itself in private life. There are not so many self-condemned sinners in the world as is generally thought; for it is much if he who has long continued in any sin has not found out some excuse or some justification for his vice. A man who has nothing to judge by but reason and Scripture, would wonder how the Scripture was ever made a party to such a defence; but those who are friends to any vice have something else that guides their judgment, self-love and interest; which are such candid interpreters, that no vice need fear being tried by the Scriptures, so long as they sit as judges.

From what cause it arises that men thus deal with the Scripture and their own reason, has been already observed:

let us now consider how we may best secure ourselves against this great abuse.

The words of the text do not directly lead to this inquiry, nor will they afford much light in it: but if we look a little forward, and observe by what means our Lord brought this disputer to do justice to the law of God, and to own even the Samaritan to be the Jew's neighbor, which was a point constantly determined otherwise by the Jewish doctors, it will teach us how men are to be dealt with, by what art they may be led into the confession of truth, and forced to give up the excuses and pretences under which they have long sheltered themselves and their iniquity.

Since therefore what is farther to be said in this argument must arise from our Lord's answer to this question put to him in the text, it will be expedient, in the first place, to set our Lord's answer before you in a true light, which has been obscured by unnecessary difficulties raised by interpreters. In answer to the lawyer's question, 'And who is my neighbor?' our Lord puts a case to him for his own judgment: A certain man, travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among thieves, lost all he had, was stripped naked, was wounded, and left for dead: a priest passed him by in this condition unregarded; a Levite did likewise: but a Samaritan, happening to travel that road, had compassion on him; dressed his wounds, set him on his own beast, and left him in good hands, engaging himself to answer whatever should be expended in the care or cure of him. On this case our Lord asks this question: 'Which now of these three thinkest thou was neighbor to him that fell among the thieves; And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go thou, and do likewise.' Great pains have been taken by some so to adjust this case, that it might yield a proper answer to the lawyer's question. He asked, 'Who is my neighbor?' that is, Whom am I obliged to love as myself? So that our Lord ought to have determined the extent and right of neighborhood, and from thence deduced the obligations of love and assistance: whereas the case supposes the love and assistance, and from thence infers the relation of neighborhood. The priest and the Levite were not neighbors, because they did not assist the wounded man: the Samaritan was his

neighbor, because he showed kindness to him. And if this be so, that no man is our neighbor till we have either showed or received kindness from him, we cannot then, from the right of neighborhood, infer the obligations of love, but must determine, from the mutual exercise of love, the notion and extent of neighborhood: and if this be the case, no man can offend against the law of loving his neighbor; for if none are our neighbors but those whom we love, then every man certainly loves his neighbors.

But if we consider the case fairly, and view it in its true light, this supposed difficulty will vanish. The question was asked by the lawyer out of a desire to justify himself: he had learned to call no man neighbor who was not of the same stock and religion with himself: Samaritans he expressly hated, and justified his hatred, because they were deserters from the true worship, and despisers of the temple which was in Jerusalem. This great error our Lord was to wrest from him, which was not to be done by battling his prejudices, and arguing on the true sense and meaning of the law: the lawyer, not unaccustomed to such exercise, would have held up the dispute, and stood resolute against any such convictions; our Saviour therefore puts him a case, and states it so that his prejudices were all shut out, and could have no influence in the determination: a Jew therefore is put into the place of distress: 'A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves.' Here could be no exception taken against the person. Had the Samaritan been placed in the same case, and his calamities painted in the most moving colors, he would have found no pity from the Jew, who would have excepted to his religion, and thought himself very much in the right to have been an enemy to the enemy of God: but when one of his nation was represented in misery, he saw reason in every thing that was done for his relief. A priest and a Levite are said to pass by and neglect him: these persons stood in all those relations to the distressed, which the lawyer owned to be the just bonds and ties of neighborhood: they were of his kindred, and they met at the same altar to worship the same God: he could not therefore but condemn their want of bowels to their brother. A Samaritan is represented as passing by, and showing the greatest tenderness and compassion to the poor Jew: this could not but be approved:

even the prejudice of the lawyer carried him in these circumstances to a right judgment; for knowing how inveterately the Jew hated the Samaritan, he could not but the more admire and approve the Samaritan's kindness to the Jew. On this case our Lord puts him to determine which was neighbor to the man in distress; or, which is the same thing, which of the three acted most agreeably to the law of God, commanding that we should 'love our neighbor as ourself:' the lawyer answers, 'He that showed mercy:' confessing that the Samaritan had fulfilled the law; which was condemning the Jewish exposition and his own prejudices: for if a Jew was rightly forbidden to show kindness to a Samaritan, because of the difference in religion between them, the same reason made it unlawful for a Samaritan to assist a Jew. Our Saviour approves his judgment, and bids him only apply it to himself, 'Go thou, and do likewise;' that is, since you commend the Samaritan for acting like a neighbor to the Jew, do you learn to act like a neighbor to the Samaritan: for this is the true force of the word 'likewise.' For a Jew to be kind to a Jew only, is not to do like the good Samaritan, who was kind not to a Samaritan only, but to a Jew also. And thus you see the case led to a full determination of the question proposed, and showed that no restrictions were to be laid on the law of God; that even those whom he accounted as his worst enemies, the very Samaritans, were intitled to the benefit of it, and ought to be treated with the love and kindness which is due to our neighbors.

From our Lord's conduct in this case, we may learn how to apply to the passions and prejudices of mankind, and by what art truth is best and most successfully introduced, where error has been long in possession. Were it a defect in our reason and understanding that made us disagree, and judge and act differently in cases where we have one and the same rule to go by, no human application could reach the distemper; since it is not in our power to enlarge the faculties which are bounded by God and nature. But our reason and our understanding are not in fault; they want only to be set free, and to be delivered from the bondage of passion and prejudice, to judge rightly in cases of morality and natural justice. If you look into the world, you will see men as much distinguished by their vices as

by the features of their faces. Few men have many reigning vices at once: covetousness, well planted in the mind, will starve out all other passions; it will suffer hardly any other vice to live by it. The same may be observed of luxury and intemperance, and of lewdness, and of ambition: where any of them florish, they take up the whole man: other vices are admitted only accidentally, and at spare hours, or as they may be subservient to the main inclination. I observe this, because on examination you will find that men's reason and judgment fail in the very same proportion that vice and passion prevail.

Did men judge perversely in all cases alike, we should not easily assign any other cause but want of judgment and reason; since nothing less would account for the total absence and defect of it: but when we find men to have reason in most cases, and to be dark only in some few; when we see them exercising their minds freely and impartially, generally speaking, but in some few instances obstinately bent to hug and to maintain a lie; it puts us to a necessary inquiry to search out some other cause that may answer this odd appearance, and account for a man's want of reason and judgment in one or two instances, who acts and judges as reasonably as his neighbors in all others. Now, if from the experience of human life you find that a man's reason and his virtue forsake him in the same instances; that he judges perversely in the same cases in which he acts perversely, and remarkably so in them only; this will teach you what it is that misguides, or rather enslaves the mind, and by what methods the freedom and liberty of reason may be restored. If the covetous man rightly condemns all vice, and perversely defends his own: if the voluptuous man abhors covetousness, fraud, and deceit, whilst he looks on his own pleasures as innocent and harmless, and can devoutly bless himself that he is no extortioner, that he does not devour the widow's house, and yet thinks himself under no great condemnation for seducing the widow's daughter, which is her richest treasure: if the ambitious man equally and justly condemns both, and yet sees no harm, no reason to be displeased with himself, for all the wild havoc which his ambition makes in the world: if these things, I say, are so, and that they are so daily experience witnesseth, it is evident what bias influences the judgment of

men, when they obstinately maintain and defend the cause of error or of vice. It is 'self' that always lies at the bottom: it is not so much the vice, as 'self,' that is to be defended; and if you can but separate 'self' from the vice, the vice will soon fall under the common sentence of reason, and be left to be condemned with its fellows.

By this honest, this holy art, our Lord convinced the lawyer who put the question of the text to him. He asked the question, intending that none should be admitted into the number of his neighbors who were not nearly allied to him; of the same nation at least. Our Saviour states a case to him, and puts it so, that his prejudices were all thrown out and silenced. The consequence was, that he who wanted to exclude almost all mankind from a right to his good offices, in a few minutes owns even the Samaritan, his most hated enemy, to be the Jew's neighbor; and by owning and accepting the Samaritan's good offices done to the Jew under the relation of a neighbor, he confessed the Samaritan's right, in that relation, to expect and receive the good offices of the Jew.

By the same method the prophet Nathan made David, in the very height of sin and extravagance, give sentence on himself and his iniquity. The wretched king had taken the wife of Uriah to his bed, and had slain the husband by the sword of the children of Ammon. When he received the message of Uriah's death, which ought to have filled him with horror and confusion, he sent this comfort to the captain of the host, which, no doubt, his false heart had first administered to himself; 'Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another:' and so satisfied he was with his reasoning on this accident of war, as he was willing to esteem it, that he soon sent for the unfortunate brave man's widow, and she became his wife. In this state of security and enjoyment the prophet Nathan comes to him: had he openly taxed him with the murder, perhaps the king had justified himself, and said to the prophet as he did to his captain, 'The sword devoureth one as well as another;' or perhaps the prophet had been rebuked for his saucy intrusion, and been forced to fly the presence of the angry king: but the prophet came with a complaint to the king of a great oppression, which a very rich man

had been guilty of towards a very poor one. David was ready to hear and redress such wrong; for this case stirred no prejudices; himself seemed unconcerned in it. The prophet's case was this: a rich man had a friend come to visit him; and for his entertainment he sent and killed a poor neighbor's solitary ewe lamb, which had been bred tame among his children, and was a great fondling, though he had large flocks of his own, and many herds, which would have yielded him any entertainment for his friend; but he spared his own numerous flocks, and robbed his poor neighbor of his one lamb, to feast his friend. The case was hard in itself, and the prophet had represented it with all the moving and tender circumstances that could be thought on. David, fired at such flagrant injustice and oppression, swore, 'As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die.' When the king had passed sentence, then the prophet opened the secret, and said, 'Thou art the man:' the ewe lamb was the wife of Uriah, whom thou hast taken from her husband, though thou hadst wives and concubines in abundance: thou hast not only robbed the poor man of his one ewe lamb, but thou hast added murder to thine oppression; thou hast killed the poor man also; thou hast slain Uriah with the sword of the children of Ammon. The king on this charge had no retreat left to his justification: he that had declared the man should die who had killed his poor neighbor's lamb, could not justify himself who had killed his poor neighbor, that he might the more easily enjoy his wife; and therefore he had nothing left but this plain confession, 'I have sinned against the Lord.'

Thus our Saviour also, under the parable of a householder and his vineyard, made the Jews bear witness to the justice of God, in rejecting their nation from being his people. When he had represented how ill the husbandmen treated the Lord of the vineyard; how they abused his servants and destroyed his Son; even the Jews could give righteous sentence in their own case, veiled under these figures, and adjudge the wicked husbandmen to destruction, and the vineyard to be let to better tenants.

It is no hard matter to get truth out of men, if you can once get beyond their prejudices, and separate the truth from all

personal views and interests; for reason is sufficiently clear, where it is not clouded and obscured by passion and affection. The heathen moralists seem to be sensible of this, when they clothe the most beneficial instructions in the dress of fable: the only reason of which is, that no man is concerned in the success of a fable, and therefore will judge impartially; which, if the instruction were brought home to him, and applied to his own case, he would not perhaps do. A passionate man will be restrained from his revenge by no prudential considerations; he despises them all; they are all the lessons of cowardice and the tokens of a mean spirit; and yet he never reads the fable of a horse, who, to revenge himself, called in a man's assistance, and taught him how to mount, from which time he lost all liberty, and has been a slave ever since, but he laughs at the horse's folly, and his impotent desire of revenge.

The consequences from what has been said are plain, and I shall but just touch them.

First, it is evident that the true art of convincing any man of his error is to throw him as much as possible out of the case; for the less a man is concerned himself, the better he judges. You are not to stir and fret his prejudices, but to decline them; not to reproach him with the error you condemn, but to place the error at a sufficient distance from him, that he may have a true light to view it in.

Secondly, in private life it is plain from hence that innocence is the only true preservative of reason and judgment: guilt will dispose you to seek excuses and subterfuges, and mislead you in your opinion of yourself and your duty. When once you find yourself laboring to justify your actions, and searching for expositions that may suit your inclinations, from that moment you may date your loss of freedom.

Thirdly, if you find yourself involved in the case you are to judge of, instead of seeking for new reasons and arguments to form your opinion by, you had much better look back, and reflect what sense you had of this matter before the cause was your own; for it is ten to one but that judgment was much more free and impartial than any you will make now: or consider, if the case admits it, what is the sense of the sober and virtuous part of the world; you may more safely trust them than your-

self where your passions are concerned: at least suppose your enemy in the same circumstances with yourself, and doing what you find yourself inclined to do, and consider what judgment you should make of him, and so judge of yourself: by these means perhaps we may preserve ourselves from the fatal influences which vice and passion have over the reason and understanding of mankind.

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE LVI.

ROMANS, CHAP. XIV.—VERSE 16.

St. Peter describes the condition of Christian warfare, adding the example of Christ, who, *when he was reviled, reviled not again.* Here one would think no man would overact his part; reproach and contempt are not riches, against the temptations or too eager pursuit of which we need be warned. We are apt to shrink at calumny, and excuse ourselves from duties, which performed would expose us to envy or ill-will: what then is the meaning of the text? Does Christ call us to suffer revilings, and his Apostle calls us to avoid them? But suppose that it is not inconsistent with our Christian duty to avoid the reproach of the world; yet can we stop malice when we do our duty, or prevent others from speaking ill of our good? Is it not enough therefore to do good, without securing it from the attempts of malice and envy? to suffer patiently the malice of wickedness, but must we partake the guilt of it too? and shall it be imputed a crime to us, that we let our good be evil spoken of? Such reasonings the text may suggest at first; but maturely considered, it will teach us how to pursue things in themselves truly praiseworthy; not only how to be good ourselves, but useful in the world, by exercising a truly Christian prudence and address in promoting the interest of virtue and religion. The gospel calls us not to court persecution for the sake of our profession: it is not for the interest of religion, or the glory of our Master, voluntarily to expose ourselves or doctrine to the contempt of the world: in both cases our Saviour has directed us otherwise, (Matt. vii. 6.):

when he sent his disciples forth to preach, his express command was, *beware of men;* thereby requiring them to consult their own personal safety. This may satisfy us of the lawfulness of avoiding danger, and clear our way to the fully understanding of the text. The rule is general, and extends itself to all parts of our Christian conversation. The Apostle applies it particularly to the controversy in the church of Rome at the time this letter was written to them; but as it arises not out of the particular circumstances of that case, we may deduce it from the general principles of Christian prudence on which it is founded. To proceed clearly, it is inquired, I. what the Apostle means by *our good:* II. endeavor is made to show that our good is often exposed to be *evil spoken of* through our own indiscretion, and therefore that we may often prevent it: whence, III. will appear the reasonableness of the duty enjoined us in the text.—I. Some by *our good* understand our religion, which is every Christian's chief good: in which point of view the text is thought to recommend simplicity of manner and inoffensiveness of behavior. But the Apostle seems to aim at something farther: his business here is not to deter us from the practice of evil, but to direct us in the use and practice of good, that our virtue may be secured from reproach; and *our good* is not the topic whence the Apostle draws an argument or exhortation, but the subject-matter of his directions. Thus then the text may be paraphrased: be not content with merely doing what is in itself good and commendable, but look forward to its probable consequences, and thus try to prevent any mischief that may grow out of it to yourself or others, that your good may be inoffensive and irreproachable: in this sense it is proposed to consider the text.—II. We cannot then be truly virtuous till we are above the temptations of the world, and free from the servitude of courting its opinion; but here men err in thinking this to be the same as to despise the world and all that belong to it: and hence it is that virtue it-

self attracts a moroseness which destroys its power of usefulness. Nor is this all: the cause of virtue often suffers by the zeal and indiscretion of such mistaken votaries, who disdainfully censure all the prudent methods by which goodness may be advanced, as the effects of worldly wisdom and cunning; and if what they do be justifiable in itself, they care not for the consequences: nay, they eagerly embrace inconveniences, esteeming it virtue to suffer for good; whence arises disdain and aversion; and hence they value themselves more for reproaching men with their vices than for correcting them. The success of such a method may be known by considering the temper and disposition of mankind. To vex and exasperate men makes them stubborn in vices and opinions, exposes your good to reproach, and gives the enemies of religion occasion to blaspheme. Zeal is the noblest grace, when duly tempered with charity and prudence, and in this state produces the best fruit; but growing extravagant, it becomes a grief to wise men, and the sport of fools. The mistake of such men lies in not distinguishing between a servile compliance with the world, and a prudent behavior towards it; the difference between which is as great as between virtue and vice: one is the way which men, who sacrifice honor and conscience to their interest, make use of; by the other wise and good men recommend the practice of virtue and religion. Those whose virtue is too stiff to court the world into a compliance with what is good, may do well to consider how the Apostle is to be justified in the character which he has given of himself, (1 Cor. ix. 19.) Into what a variety of shapes did he turn himself, to gain on the affections of men, that he might win them over to the gospel! this point enlarged on, and illustrated by the case of a skilful pilot. But to court the affections of men some think below the dignity of religion. How so? ought not men to be made to love virtue and religion? Yes; and how is that to be done but by engaging their affections in its cause? Is then the

attempt to do so an unworthy one? How can these things be made to agree? But if it must be allowed that it is necessary to apply to men's affections in the cause of virtue, it will show the reasonableness of the text, and the necessity of having recourse to Christian prudence and wisdom to direct us in the practice even of good: for all things have not the same appearance to all men, and we must therefore beware of the ill impressions which may be made on others by the good we do. This care not to offend is the foundation of civility and good-breeding in common life, and will produce mutual love and condescension in religion: this point enlarged on. View but the difference in one Christian grace, when attended by this care, and when not. This exemplified in the case of zeal, which is in itself an excellent gift. Some there are who care so little for securing their good from being evil spoken of, that their zeal for good arises even from envy and strife: this spirit is still in being, and often makes men spitefully good, delighting to exasperate others who differ from them: this point enlarged on. They justify themselves by saying that men ought not to be ashamed when they are in the right, or afraid of owning the truth; two very good reasons sadly applied: for men ought to be ashamed so to use truth, as merely to insult, not to correct, the prejudices of mankind. But there is still a farther mischief: when men truly labor to promote truth, and recommend it to others, they always place it in the best light, and take care to obviate the misapprehensions of those with whom they deal: but when they dispute for opposition sake, or for their own amusement at the expense of another, they care not whether he understands the truth, or how grossly he mistakes; for the more violence he shows, the greater is their entertainment: this point and its consequences enlarged on, showing the probability of his error continuing for ever, thus exposing our good to be *evil-spoken of*. The same effect is often seen to proceed from a mixture of zeal and ignorance. In this case men think they must do or

say the things which they approve, when they are before those who they know do not approve them: this case enlarged on. Sometimes men expose their good to be evil-spoken of from pure pride and haughtiness of temper: this is the case when men so despise the world as not to care about guarding against the misapprehensions of those around them. The very reason why you despise the world, and disdain to give an account of your actions, viz. because it is weak and captious, is the reason why you ought to try to satisfy it; and in this the rule of the Apostle is founded, as appears from chap. xv. 1. No man, how great soever he may be, is above rendering an account of himself to the world. It is not greatness of soul, but a narrow-spirited insolence and pride that makes men averse to it, teaching them to glory not so much in the worthiness of their actions, as in despising every one else: a generous virtue enlarged on, showing that if candor were more practised in the world, it might prevent much hatred and animosity; since few intend half the mischief of which they are suspected.—III. As it is often in our power to prevent our good from being *evil spoken of*, so in many cases it is our duty. This duty may be deduced from these principles; the honor of God and of truth, the charity that is due to our brethren, and the justice that is due to ourselves. The honor of God is chiefly consulted by reconciling men's minds to the love of virtue and religion, by removing their prejudices, and gently drawing their affections to the cause of goodness: the most substantial honor that we can pay our Maker, is to *exalt his name among the people, and teach every tongue to confess his truth:* this point enlarged on. It will appear also to be a part of that charity which is owing to our neighbor: we know how much his happiness depends on approving that which is good; for *without holiness no man shall see God:* this duty then is to be performed not by rendering our *good* odious and offensive to him, but by setting it forth with-

out scandal or offence, that he may be ashamed of nothing, but rather love and embrace it. But farther, it is a piece of justice which we owe to ourselves and our own character, to render our good irreproachable: for when it suffers, we suffer with it, and share in the reproaches that fall on it. It is doubtful whether it be justifiable in the good we do to have regard to our own reputation: to make it the end of what we do is certainly bad; for the applause of the world is not the end of religion: but a good man can do so much good by having a good reputation, that it is his duty to consult his credit and character in what he does: hence he refrains from those freedoms which the world judges unbecoming his character, though harmless in themselves; and surely this restraint is an innocent way of aspiring to a good reputation. Nor is this prudent behavior inconsistent with a steady and constant adherence to the truth, which is not to be deserted that it may not be evil spoken of, but is to be practised without offence. In matters essential to religion there is no room for compliance; and in matters of Christian liberty there is hardly any room for denying it: where we are free, the greatest deference is to be paid to the opinions, nay, even to the prejudices of others: this point enlarged on to the end.

DISCOURSE LVI.

ROMANS, CHAP. XIV.—VERSE 16.

Let not then your good be evil spoken of.

In describing the condition of our Christian warfare, St. Peter tells us, 'If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God:' to this, says he, you are called by the example of Christ, who suffered reproaches willingly, and 'when he was reviled, reviled not again.' This is a duty in which one would think there should be no danger of any man's overacting his part. Reproach and contempt are not such desirable riches, that we need be warned against their temptations, or cautioned lest we too earnestly pursue after them. We are apt enough to shrink at the approach of calumny, and to invent plausible excuses for the neglect of a duty, which performed would expose us to envy or ill-will. What then means the Apostle by this exhortation, 'Let not your good be evil spoken of?' Are we called by Christ to suffer revilings and reproaches? and are we called by his Apostle to fly from them and avoid them? Our Saviour seems to speak another language to us in his sermon on the mount: 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you:' and if it be our happiness to be reviled, how is it our duty to take care not to be evil spoken of for our good?

But suppose, however, that it is no way inconsistent with our Christian duty to avoid the calumny and reproach of the world; yet still is it in our power to stop the mouth of malice and wickedness? When we do our duty, can we help it if others will speak evil of our good? Why are not they rather exhorted not to speak evil of our good, than we not to let our

good be evil spoken of? It is not in our power to govern other people's tongues: is it not enough therefore that the thing we do is good, but must it likewise lie on us to secure our good from the attempts of malice and envy? Is it not sufficient that we suffer patiently under the malice of wickedness, but must we partake in the guilt of it too; and shall it be imputed to us as a crime, that we let our good be evil spoken of?

Such reasonings as these perhaps the text may suggest at first hearing: but when maturely considered, it will afford excellent instruction for our conduct in the pursuit of those things which are in themselves truly good and praiseworthy; it will teach us not only how to be good in ourselves, but likewise how to be useful in the world, by exercising a truly Christian prudence and address in promoting the interest of virtue and religion.

To court oppression and persecution, to invite the world to misuse us for the sake of our profession, is far from being a duty to which the gospel has called us. It is neither for the interest of our religion, nor the glory of our Master, that we should voluntarily expose either ourselves or our doctrine to the hatred and contempt of the world: in both cases our Saviour has given other directions; 'Give not,' says he, 'that which is holy unto the dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you:' Matt. vii. 6. And when he sent his disciples forth to preach, he expressly commanded them to 'beware of men;' not only allowing, but requiring them to have a regard to their own safety, and cautiously to shift the dangers to which they were necessarily to be exposed.

This may satisfy us of the lawfulness and expediency of guarding against the dangers that may attend the practice and profession of religion in an evil world, and clear our way to the understanding the extent and meaning of the Apostle's advice, 'Let not your good be evil spoken of.'

The rule is general, and extends itself to all parts of our Christian conversation: it stands applied indeed by the Apostle to a particular case, which was matter of controversy in the church of Rome at the time this letter was written to them: but as the rule does not arise out of the particular circum-

stances of that case, there will be no necessity of considering it with reference to the dispute which the Apostle had in his view; but we may deduce it from the general principles of Christian prudence and charity in which it is founded. And that we may proceed clearly to the point we aim at, I shall,

First, inquire what we are to understand the Apostle to mean by 'our good.'

Secondly, endeavor to show that 'our good' is often exposed to be 'evil spoken of' through our own indiscretion; and consequently, that it is often in our own power to prevent it: from whence,

In the last place, will appear the reasonableness of the duty enjoined us in the text.

First, we are to inquire what we are to understand the Apostle to mean by 'our good.' And here we may meet with different opinions: some, by 'our good,' understand our religion, which is indeed every Christian's chief good; and according to this sense of the words the Apostle must be understood to exhort us to have a regard to the honor of the gospel in all our actions, and to administer no occasion to the enemies of our religion either to deride or despise our holy calling. And thus the text amounts to an argument, or exhortation, to move us to a simplicity of manners and an inoffensive behavior, for fear lest we bring a reproach on our profession. But the Apostle seems to aim at something farther: his business here is not to deter us from the practice of evil, but to direct us in the use and practice of that which is good, that our virtue may be without offence, and secured from calumny and reproach: and 'our good,' mentioned in the text, is not the topic from which the Apostle draws an argument or exhortation, but is the subject matter concerning which he is giving directions. According to this interpretation of the words, the text may be thus paraphrased: Be not content with merely doing that which is in itself good and commendable, but look forward to the consequences which are likely to attend it, and endeavor to prevent any mischief that may grow out of it to yourself or others, that your good may be inoffensive and irreproachable. In this sense it is that I propose to consider the text; and shall now proceed,

Secondly, to show that our good is often exposed to be evil spoken of through our own indiscretion; and consequently that it is often in our own power to prevent it.

There is no such thing as being truly good and virtuous till we are got to be above the temptations of the world, and free from the servitude of courting its opinion: but then it is too common a mistake for men to think, that to be above the temptations of the world is the same thing as to despise the world and all that belong to it: and hence it is that virtue often contracts such a moroseness, and becomes so untractable, that it can be of no public use or benefit, but is confined to its own cell, the poor honest heart that possesses it.

Nor is this the only inconvenience: the cause of virtue itself often suffers by the zeal and indiscretion of such mistaken votaries: they look with disdain on all the prudent methods by which goodness may be advanced, and censure them as the effects of worldly wisdom and cunning; and provided the thing they do be in itself justifiable, they are above considering the consequences that may attend it: nay, the greater the inconveniences are which threaten them, the more eagerly they embrace them, esteeming it to be the most generous part of virtue to suffer for that which is good. This sort of inflexible goodness naturally runs out into disdain and aversion, and makes men value themselves more for hating a knave than they would do for reforming him, and to look on it as a higher degree of virtue to reproach men with their vices than it is to correct and amend them.

What success must attend this method of propagating virtue and religion may be soon known, by considering the temper and disposition of mankind. To vex and exasperate men can serve only to make them stubborn in their vices and obstinate in their opinions; and all that is got by it is to expose the good you do to reproach, and to give the enemies of religion occasion to blaspheme. Zeal is the noblest grace, when duly tempered with charity and prudence, and whilst it continues under their influence, it produces the noblest fruit; but when it breaks loose from these restraints, it grows wild and extravagant, and becomes the grief of wise men, and the sport and laughter of fools.

This is one way by which men expose their good to be evil spoken of. Their mistake lies in not rightly distinguishing between a servile compliance with the world, and a prudent behavior towards it; and yet there is as much difference between them as between virtue and vice: one is the way which men who sacrifice honor and conscience to their interest make use of; the other is the method which wise and good men take to recommend the practice of virtue and religion. And what a wide difference is this? In the first case, to comply with the world, you must be like it, you must conform yourself to it: in the other, you treat the world civilly, that it may the more easily become like you; that you may gain on it, and instil the principles of virtue, which may be infused by gentle degrees, but cannot be obtruded by noise and violence.

Those who are of too stiff a virtue to court the world into a compliance with that which is good, may do well to consider how our Apostle is to be justified in the character he has given us of himself: 'Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law (being not without the law to God, but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some:' 1 Cor. ix. 19. &c. Into what a variety of shapes did he turn himself, to gain on the affections of men, that he might the more easily gain admission for the gospel of Christ? Had he fallen directly on their infirmities and mistakes, he might have fired their minds, and stopped their ears to his instruction. He knew that patience and gentle teaching would by degrees get the mastery of their errors, and lead them, without tumult or opposition, to the acknowlegement of the truth; that their prejudices would wear out: and as the light of the gospel began to dawn in their hearts, their affections would take a new turn of themselves, which at present were not to be stemmed. He used the art of a skilful pilot, who chooses to coast it along the shore when the tide runs too high in the

channel, as knowing it to be not only the safest, but the shortest way to the point he makes.

Yet thus to court the affections of men is by many thought below the dignity of religion: but where does this indignity lie? Ought not men to be made in love with virtue and religion? Yes, you will say: and how is that to be done? Must it not be by engaging their affections in the cause of religion? Undoubtedly it must. And is it then necessary to engage men's affections in the cause of religion? And is it yet an unworthy attempt to endeavor to engage them? How can these things be made to agree? But if it must be allowed that it is necessary to apply to men's affections in the cause of virtue and religion, it will show the reasonableness of the Apostle's advice in the text, and the necessity there is of having recourse to Christian prudence and wisdom to direct us in the practice even of that which is good: for all things have not the same appearance to all men; nay, the same object appears differently to the same man, as it is exposed in different lights; which holds as true with respect to the eyes of the mind as of the body: and therefore it lies on us to guard against any ill impressions that may be made on others by the good we do.

This care not to offend is the foundation of civility and good breeding in common life, and will likewise be productive of mutual love and condescension in religion: it will teach us to be tender of each other's infirmities, and to avoid the occasions of giving offence, which men who have not this care on their minds rather labor to seek and to improve. Let us but view the difference there will be in one Christian grace, when attended with this care, and when not: let the grace be zeal, which is in itself, without doubt, an excellent gift; but where men have no regard how far they trust or offend others, how rash and intemperate does it grow, in reproaching not only the vices, but the follies and weaknesses of mankind; how easily does it degenerate into censoriousness, and transport men beyond all bounds of charity and discretion! The consequence is, that it is immediately surrounded with enemies of its own raising, and suffers under the names of fury and uncharitableness. But on the other side, where it is found in company with prudence, and joined with a care not to offend, it is a gentle and heavenly

flame, which warms without scorching: it falls on its right object, the honor of God, and the good of men, and confines itself to such methods only as may best serve to promote both: it will therefore never run into any indecencies of passion, which are unbecoming the cause it maintains; nor will it provoke and exasperate those whom it labors to reform, as knowing what little benefit men can receive by being ill-treated. Thus will it secure itself from being evil spoken of, and appear with advantage in the eyes of all that behold it. But farther,

Some there are who have so little regard to the securing their good from being evil spoken of, that their zeal for good arises even from envy and strife. This spirit is still in being; and it is no uncommon thing for men to be spitefully good, and to delight in the opportunities of exasperating others who differ from them: men often fall on subjects for no other reason but because they know how disagreeable they are to some of the company; and to justify themselves, they say that men ought not to be ashamed when they are in the right, or afraid of owning the truth; which are two very good reasons very sadly applied; for men ought to be ashamed of making this use of truth, which is merely insulting the prejudices of mankind, and not correcting them. It is a very unnatural effect of love for the truth, to labor to make others hate it; and yet what else can be expected from these measures? To make a reproach of the truth, and to upbraid men with it, is to place it in such a light before them, that it must necessarily appear to them a frightful object. It is certain that men are never to be complimented at the expense of truth or religion; nor can too hard a name be given to the mean spirit that makes men always join in the opinion of their company; nor are the opportunities which conversation affords of justifying ourselves and our opinions from the misapprehensions of others, to be neglected. It is mightily for the advancement of peace and truth that men should rightly understand each other; and this is one of the best ends that is served by conversation: and therefore there is the greater mischief in perverting it, and using it as an opportunity of revenging ourselves: the consequence of it is very plain; it makes men seldom care to converse with any

but those of their own opinion; which is the way to establish error, and to propagate it for ever. There is a difference between beating a man with the truth, and endeavoring to convince him of it; and between raising his passions to oppose it, and preparing them to receive it. This is the true end of conversation, though the other is too often the use of it; and the mischief is sufficiently great, if we only consider what a stubbornness in opinion men contract by being so unseasonably provoked.

But there is still a farther mischief: when men truly labor to promote truth, and recommend it to others, they always place it in its best light, and take care to obviate the misapprehensions of those they deal with; but where they enter into a question merely for opposition sake, or for the pleasure of exposing somebody else, they care not how little he understands the truth, or how grossly he mistakes; for the more violence and passion he shows against it, the greater the entertainment; and therefore instead of obviating his doubts, stumbling-blocks are laid in his way, and the thing is painted industriously in such colors as are known to be most offensive to him; and what is the consequence? He for ever takes his measure of your opinion from this representation of it, and goes away persuaded that you could not answer the objections which you would not: you have your entertainment for the present, and he his error, it is probable, for ever. And is not this wilfully to expose our good to be evil spoken of, and for the sake of an ill-natured diversion, to sacrifice the interest of truth and religion?

The same effect is often seen to proceed from a mixture of zeal and ignorance: in this case men often judge it absolutely necessary to do or say the things they approve, when they are before those who they know do not approve them: they look on it to be asserting the truth; and to do otherwise, in their opinion, is deserting it. This was something of the case which the Apostle had before him when he wrote the words of the text. The question in the church of Rome was, concerning the lawful or unlawful use of meats forbidden in the law of Moses: those who held it lawful to use them were never more zealous of their liberty, or more certain to make use of it, than when they met

at table with those of another opinion: this gave rise to many scandals and offences. The Apostle, who allowed the use of all meats indifferently, disapproved this perverse uncharitable use of them; and among many other reasons, gave this as one, 'Let not your good be evil spoken of.' But to proceed:

Sometimes men expose their good to be evil spoken of out of pure pride and haughtiness of temper: this is the case when men have such a contempt for the world as not to think it worth their while to guard against the misapprehensions of those about them. They reckon it below their dignity to render any account of what they do, and a mark of guilt to descend so low as to justify their actions. But surely, if we estimate the thing fairly, it is betraying of that which is good to reproach, and laying of stumbling-blocks in the way of the blind. The very reason why you despise the world, and disdain to give any account to it of what you do, because the world is weak and captious, and below a wise man's notice, is the reason why you ought to endeavor to satisfy it. This rule of the Apostle has its rise from the weakness of men; and the very end of it is to direct us how to walk with respect to those who are weak, and unable to judge of things so perfectly as we do. Do but read the first verse of the next chapter, in which the Apostle sums up the advice he had given, and you will see that the Apostle lays his foundation in the known or supposed weakness of men: 'We then,' says he, 'that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves:' and when he advises us not to let our good be evil spoken of, what else is it but to advise us to guard against the weakness and misapprehensions of men? He knew surely that good could not be liable to be evil spoken of but by being misunderstood; and therefore he can mean nothing else in this charge, but that we should condescend to the weakness of others, and keep our good out of the way of being misunderstood by them.

How much below a wise man you may think this conduct I cannot say; bnt I am sure it is not below a good man, who will think nothing below him that tends to the honor and advancement of virtue; and nothing more does so than to justify virtue and goodness in the eyes of the world. Things are capable of very different constructions; and all men cannot equally judge

of the consequences and tendencies of opinions and actions; and therefore it is a duty owing to yourself, your neighbor, and the truth, to fence your actions and principles against the misapprehensions of weak minds. Your own reputation, your neighbor's satisfaction, and the honor of truth, are equally concerned, and equally demand this justice at your hands.

Nor is any man, how great soever he is, above rendering an account of himself to the world. It is not true magnanimity or greatness of soul that makes men averse to it, but a narrow-spirited insolence and pride that possesses them, and teaches them to place their glory, not so much in the worthiness of their actions, as in despising and contemning every body else. A generous virtue is open and free, harbors no ill designs, and therefore fears no discovery; and never appears more truly glorious than when it is most truly understood: it loves the light, because its deeds are good; and is always ready to render an account of itself, because it can always render a good one. Were this openness and plainness more practised in the world, perhaps it might prevent a great deal of that hatred and animosity, which are founded in mutual jealousies and suspicions: I imagine this would be the consequence, because I verily believe that few men intend half the mischief that they are suspected of.

There are other instances to be given, in which men expose their good to be evil spoken of: when a man sacrifices truth and honor to interest, and basely deserts the cause which he approves, truth itself often suffers, and others think there was but little in the profession, since so little appears in action: but in this and the like cases men may be more properly said to expose themselves to be evil spoken of than their good; for the world is generally so quick-sighted as to know that such treachery is to be charged, not on the cause, but the man: these instances therefore do not so immediately belong to the present subject. I proceed now to the last particular, which is to show,

Thirdly, that as it is often in our power to prevent our good from being evil spoken of, so in many cases it is our duty.

This duty may, I think, be deduced from these principles;

the honor of God and of truth, the charity that is owing to our brethren, and the justice that is due to ourselves.

The honor of God is chiefly consulted by reconciling men's minds to the love of virtue and religion, by removing their prejudices, and gently drawing their affections to the cause of goodness: this is the most substantial honor we can pay our Maker, to 'exalt his name among the people, and teach every tongue to confess his truth.' It is certain men can never love the thing they speak evil of; and therefore the first step to make men in love with virtue, is to remove out of their way all possible offences, to do nothing, not even that which is good, out of contention, which is the way to elevate the passions and depress the judgment, and blind men from seeing and acknowleging the truth. In all human actions the passions and affections will have a share; and therefore it is necessary to court them by all fair means even in the cause of virtue: and what honester method can be taken, than to secure our good from being evil spoken of? Good ought not to be evil spoken of; and therefore ought not to be exposed to the hazard of it without necessity. An indiscreet good man often does a great deal of mischief in the world, and raises an opposition to the good which he meant to recommend: our Saviour therefore, as a necessary qualification for preaching the gospel, exhorts his disciples to be 'wise as serpents, and innocent as doves.' Innocence is of absolute necessity in a preacher of righteousness: some degree of wisdom cannot well be spared: the greater the degree is, the more effectually will it secure his innocence, and recommend it to the imitation of the world. A great many men are judged to want the innocence of the dove, when indeed they want nothing but some of the wisdom of the serpent; and men are suspected of very evil designs and black intentions, when indeed their hearts are free from malice, and their indiscretion is their only fault. This shows, however, how necessary it is, in order to promote the honor of God and religion, always to walk by this rule, and to take care 'that our good be not evil spoken of.'

It will appear likewise to be a part of that charity which is owing to our neighbor: we know how much his happiness de-

pends on approving that which is good; 'Without holiness no man shall see God;' ought we not then to labor to recommend virtue and religion to his choice, to render it acceptable in his sight, and by that means lead him to taste the fruit of the tree of life? And how is this to be done? Not by rendering our good odious and offensive to him; not by making it matter of reproach and scandal to him; but by setting it forth in its native gentleness, without scandal or offence; that he may be ashamed of nothing, but that he did not sooner love and embrace it. Thus must the salvation of mankind be set forward; *Hæ tibi erunt artes:* let ignorance and superstition triumph in reproach, supported by wilfulness and haughty pride; but let truth rejoice in meekness, and become all things to all men, that it may gain some. But, farther,

It is a piece of justice that we owe to ourselves and our own character, to render our good irreproachable: when our good suffers, we must suffer with it, and partake in the reproaches that fall on it; and therefore it is prudence, with respect even to our own interest and credit, to avoid giving offence as much as possible. It is matter of doubt whether it be justifiable in the good we do to have regard to our own reputation: to make it the end of what we do is certainly bad; for the applause of the world is not the end of religion; but a good man is capable of doing so much good by having a good reputation, that it is certainly his duty to consult his credit and character in what he does: for this reason he ought to restrain himself in those freedoms, which in the judgment of the world are unbecoming his character, though in themselves they be innocent and harmless. But surely there cannot be a more innocent way of aspiring to a reputation, than taking care that our good be not evil spoken of; than in providing against the mistakes and misinterpretations that others may make of what we do: and therefore this argument in this case may justly be allowed its full weight.

And thus you see of what great moment it is to render our good unsuspected and free from reproach: it is the way to advance our own credit, to consult the good of our neighbor, and to promote the honor and glory of God.

This prudent behavior is not inconsistent with a steady and constant adherence to the truth; for the truth is not to be de-

serted that it may not be evil spoken of, but it is to be practised without offence.

In matters essential to religion there is no room for compliance; and in matters of Christian liberty there is hardly any room for denying it: where we are free, the greatest deference is to be paid to the opinions, nay, even to the prejudices of others. This distinction is not of my own making; but we have the exception and the rule from the same hand; for the Apostle, in the verse after the text, adds, 'For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink.' Take the whole of the Apostle's admonition together, and you will easily perceive the meaning of these words. The dispute was about the lawfulness of meats: 'I know,' says the Apostle, 'and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself—but if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably:' that is, I allow it is lawful for you to eat; but yet, if you eat with the offence of your brother, you offend against charity. 'Let not then,' says he, 'your good be evil spoken of; for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink.' This being the case, forbear eating, when eating will give offence: for it is not necessary to your gospel obedience, or to the establishing the kingdom of God, that you should eat; for it is a matter of Christian liberty, and you may act which way you please. From which it is plain, that in matters that are necessary to the establishing the kingdom of heaven, we are not at the same liberty to please and humor men: for the reason the Apostle gives in this case, why it ought to be done, is, that the kingdom of God consisted not in it; which is by implication an exception to the rule, and amounts to saying, This advice which I give you, of forbearing things which are offensive, extends only to matters of Christian liberty; for where the kingdom of God is concerned, you must be content to follow Christ, and us his Apostles, 'through good report and evil report.'

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE LVII.

NUMBERS, CHAP. XXIII.—VERSE 10.

THESE affecting words are apt to engage us on their side at the first hearing; for whatever be our present prospects, when thus called from them, we stand as it were beholding ourselves under the arrest of death; we want no arguments to direct our choice to what is best for ourselves: these circumstances carry conviction with them; and though unwilling to live the life of the righteous, we are willing enough that *our last end should be like his.* There is a comparison implied in the text between the cases of the wicked and the righteous, which the mind readily supplies: it is stated under circumstances which throw out all prejudices and partialities, and bring only the merits of the cause on each side into judgment. You see the wicked and the righteous both on the point of death, and you are to say which condition you would choose: the pleasures of the world on one side, the supposed hardships on the other, are equally set aside: you are to judge between virtue and vice, placed naked at the bar, without color or disguise. It may seem perhaps that we have but little confidence in the cause of virtue under all other circumstances of life, when we defer this judgment to the last moments of it: it may be thought unfair to state the case without the pleasures and enjoyments on one side, and the difficulties and discouragements on the other, which things weigh most with the generality of men; whilst we leave nothing but the doubtful prospect of a future state, and every thing is taken out of the other scale, which, as we find by general experience, serves to balance against such hopes and

fears: it is perhaps saying little for virtue, that its hopes should be preferred to the fears of iniquity, when nothing but mere hope and fear is left; for who would not prefer the most uncertain chance of being happy to the least degree of fear of being miserable, or even to the thoughts of endless sleep? Were these exceptions well founded, the comparison in the text would lose much weight; but there are no times or circumstances of life in which virtue may not be compared with vice, the passions, prejudices, and corruptions of men being put out of the question. The words of the text, in their first and natural sense, lead us to this comparison not only in the latest hours, but in all the course and circumstances of life: they arise from the contemplation of the present and future prosperity of the Israelites in the land of promise, compared with the misery of the idolatrous nations, given up to sin and superstition, and therefore to ruin. Numb. xxiii. 9. 10. and xxiv. 20. compared together: these passages help to expound each other; for as the prophecy relating to Amalek was completed in the temporal destruction of that people, so by parity of reason the prophecy concerning Israel imported their temporal happiness. Bishop Patrick's interpretation of the words, *let my last end be like his*, by *let my posterity be like his*, gives us farther reason to suppose that temporal prosperity was contained in the prophesier's wish, as a peculiar inheritance of the righteous. The other sense of the text, which looks to a future life, is of ancient date: nor need we be much concerned to determine between the two; both fairly arising from the text; both agreeable to the apprehensions of mankind, and founded in reason and nature. That *righteousness exalteth a nation*, that *sin* is not only *a reproach*, but also a weakening to any people, are truths which want no proof. In all ages, all lawgivers, philosophers, and moralists, have been of this opinion, which experience has justified: this point exemplified by the rise and fall of nations. But besides this, if we believe the being of a God, and have

just notions of his attributes, and think him at all concerned in the government of this his world, we must conclude that virtuous nations are under his peculiar care: this point enlarged on. Yet though all allow that virtue is the true foundation of the happiness and prosperity of public societies, men differ much in opinion and practice respecting the choice and pursuit of happiness for themselves; yet the same thing which is necessary to the happiness of a kingdom, is also necessary to that of private families and private men: this point enlarged on. Since then all allow that virtue is the true way to public happiness, they must confess that private happiness is to be obtained only by the same method: whence then the inconsistency of men in preferring the momentary pleasures of vice to the solid happiness arising from virtue? Whence is it that they think, that what makes others miserable will make them happy? This difference arises not from the nature of the things considered, which is always the same, but from the passions of men, which are excluded in the one case, and admitted in the other with all their force to bias the judgment. We can deliberate calmly on what is right for other men, as their passions have no effect on our understanding; but in our own case all our passions are roused, and often prove too strong for it. There is much truth in the common observation, that it is easier to give good instructions than to follow them: but this ought to be no prejudice to the cause of virtue; for when a man speaks reason, and at the same time acts against it, he ought to be taken as a strong witness for the truth. It may be asked perhaps, why we prefer the judgment of a man when he chooses happiness for others, to his judgment when he chooses it for himself. Do we not know that men are most sincere when their own prosperity is concerned? this point enlarged on, from the consideration of men who should form laws for suppressing vices which they themselves practised. But by this method of arguing, there is but one law for man and

beast: reason makes no difference in the case, since the happiness of both consists in the mere gratifications of sense; a conclusion too absurd for any reasonable man to embrace: this point enlarged on. But we have no reason to decline the comparison between the pleasures of vice and the calm enjoyments of virtue; let us view these conditions nearer, and see whether there be no reason to wish that we may live the life of the righteous as well as die his death. The wicked can make out no peculiar title to the good things of this life, which may be held and enjoyed by the righteous as well as by the wicked, though they differ much in the use which they make of them: therefore the only question is, whether a man is happier with a large fortune, used within the bounds of virtue, or made subservient to all the ends and pleasures of vice; or fortune being removed out of the case, whether the difficulties of life attendant on mean circumstances, are more tolerable to a virtuous or a vicious man. If we allow the vicious man to have a greater share of sensual gratifications, he can claim no more advantages; and let him set his own value on them, which however enables him not to judge of the happiness or unhappiness of those who deny themselves the same liberties. The virtuous man not only abstains from the pleasures of vice, but subdues the passions of it, and thus renders himself capable of much nobler enjoyments, which perpetually delight the mind; so that even in this case there is reason to believe that virtue has the advantage over vice. But the consequences of their different ways of living, such only as are soon made manifest to the eyes of the world, render the case very clear: observe the health and vigor attendant on virtue, the pains and diseases which closely follow vice; the mind of the virtuous man surrounded with a constant calm serenity, that of the other by disturbed imaginations, restless desires, and unpleasant thoughts: this topic enlarged on, showing that reason will have the last influence in making us happy or miserable. The wounds of the

body may be cured, but for the wounds of the spirit the world affords no salve: the truest touchstone to prove the things that are conducive to our happiness, is to consider their future operations on the mind for the rest of our life: this point illustrated by the case of a man, who, having got possession of an estate through wicked measures, is haunted by his own thoughts; and whether this man is happy who lives under a continual displeasure with himself, let any one judge. This displeasure is inconsistent with any real enjoyment; so that sin lays the foundation of misery immovably and close to us. Besides, the sense of virtue, which does and will exist among reasonable beings, must render a vicious man contemptible both to himself and others, and therefore unhappy; for no man can easily bear contempt, knowing that he deserves it. Thus in this case also does the wicked man appear given up to misery. But hitherto his case has been considered with respect only to this world, and the natural effect of his vice; which he will himself confess to be but an imperfect description of his condition; for he has other foreboding fears of future misery sufficient to poison all the pleasures of life. He sees that in this life all things come to an end, and that the wicked and the righteous equally go down to the grave; but what future distinctions there may be, answerable to the natural hopes and fears of the mind, he hates to remember, yet cannot forget. The satisfied passion haunts him in the language of Israel's king: *know that for all these things God will call thee unto judgment.* Say however, and it is all the wicked have to say, that such imaginations may be delusive, and such fears vain; yet weak as these fears may be, we must be still weaker before we can get rid of them; we must lose our reason and understanding, before we can forget that there is a God who will judge the world righteously. This result of innate reason, true or false, must affect our present happiness; and if true, will add eternity to the misery of the wicked. Some sinners indeed are found, so

hardened as to be for many years proof against all such considerations; yet they are not secure: vice will soon impair their strength, and bring down the pride of their hearts: and when infirmities lay hold of them, and death draws near to execute his commission, they awake as one out of a dream; and their long silenced fears begin to speak with double terror. Then what is the sinner's condition? Ask him then whether the fears of futurity are all idle dreams? And as you like his answer, follow his example. Concluding reflexions.

DISCOURSE LVII.

NUMBERS, CHAP. XXIII.—VERSE 10.

Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.

THERE is something very affecting in these words, and apt to engage us on the first hearing to become parties to the good wish contained in them. Whatever our present thoughts, views, and inclinations are, yet when our eyes are called off from the prospects of the world, and fixed on the last point of life, and we stand as it were beholding ourselves under the arrest of death, and just ready to expire, we want no arguments to direct our choice to what is best for ourselves. These circumstances carry conviction with them; and how indisposed soever we are to live the life of the righteous, we are willing to die his death, and that 'our last end should be like his.'

There is a comparison implied in the words of the text, between the case of the wicked and the case of the righteous, which the mind readily supplies. The comparison is stated under such circumstances as throw out all prejudices and partialities, and bring only the merits of the cause on both sides into judgment. You are called on to behold the wicked and the righteous, both at the point of death, and to say which condition you would choose for yourself: in this view, the pleasures and allurements of the world on one side, the supposed difficulties and hardships on the other, are equally set aside: virtue and vice are brought naked to the bar, clothed only in their own natural features, without color or disguise; and being thus placed before you, your judgment is desired. We have no exceptions to take in behalf of virtue to any judge; let the most corrupt give sentence, yet corruption shall not

prevail; but virtue shall be justified out of the sinner's mouth, whilst he wishes to 'die the death of the righteous, and that his last end may be like his.'

It may seem perhaps that we have but little confidence in the cause of virtue under all other circumstances and conditions of life, when we defer the judgment to the last moments, and bring the wicked and the righteous to the very doors of death, before we venture to ask your opinion on their several conditions: it may be thought unfair too, so to state the case as to exclude all the pleasures and enjoyments on one side, all the difficulties and discouragements on the other, which are the very considerations that are known to weigh most with the generality of mankind, and to leave nothing but the prospect, whether certain or uncertain, of a future state, when every thing is removed out of the contrary scale, which might serve, as in experience we find they do serve at other times, to balance against such hopes and fears: it may be said too, that it is no very great commendation to virtue, that men should prefer the hopes it offers to the fears of iniquity, when all contest is over in other respects, and at a time when nothing is left but mere hope and fear; for who would not prefer the most uncertain chance of being happy to the least degree of fear of being miserable, or even to the thoughts of falling into silence and perpetual sleep?

Were these exceptions well founded, it would take much from the weight of the comparison laid before us in the text: but the truth is, that there is no time or circumstance of life in which virtue may not bear being compared with vice, the passions and prejudices and corruptions of mankind being moved out of the question.

The words of the text, in their first and most natural sense, lead us to compare the wicked and the righteous, not only in their latest hours, but in the whole course and circumstances of their life: they arise from the contemplation of the happiness and prosperity of the people of Israel, and their future greatness and security in the land of promise, compared with the misery of the idolatrous nations, given up to sin and superstition, and therefore devoted to ruin. 'The people,' says the prophesier, 'shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned

among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.' And in the next chapter, 'When he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be, that he perish for ever.'

These two places help to expound each other; for as the prophecy relating to Amalek was completed in the temporal destruction of that people, so by parity of reason the prophecy concerning Israel imported the temporal happiness of that nation. It was denounced against Amalek, 'that he should perish for ever;' that he should be cut off, and leave no posterity behind him: but to Israel a long continuance of great increase is promised; 'Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?'

If we add to this the remark of the learned Bishop Patrick, that the original words, which our translators render, 'Let my last end be like his,' may properly be rendered, 'Let my posterity be like his;' it will give us farther reason to acknowlege that temporal prosperity was not excluded from the prophesier's thoughts, but was contained in his wish, as the peculiar lot and inheritance of the righteous.

The other sense of the words, which looks beyond the limits of this world, and considers the wicked and the righteous distinguished by their merits in another state of life, has of ancient times been ascribed to the text: nor need we be much concerned to determine between the two expositions; since both fairly arise from the words before us, both are agreeable to the apprehensions, and, as far as experience teaches, to the experience of mankind, and both have a foundation in reason and nature.

That 'righteousness exalteth a nation,' that 'sin' is not only 'a reproach,' but also a weakening to 'any people,' are truths so universally received as to want no proof. All lawgivers in all times have thought so, and made it their business to cultivate virtue and justice, temperance and frugality, and to discourage the contrary vices. Philosophers and moralists have been in the same opinion, and have taught with one consent that the virtue of the people is the stability of all govern-

ments, and the true source of public prosperity. Practice and experience have, in all ages, answered to the truth of these speculations. If we consult the memoirs of the most renowned nations, which have made a figure in the world, we shall find that they rose to greatness by virtue, and sank into nothing through vice; that they got dominion by their temperance and probity of manners, and a serious regard to religion; and that when they grew dissolute, luxurious, and despisers of religion, they became slaves to their neighbors, whom they were no longer worthy to govern.

Besides the natural tendency which there is in virtue to make nations great and happy, there is this farther to be considered: if we believe the being of a God, and have just notions of his attributes, and think him at all concerned in the government of this world which he made, we must necessarily conclude that virtuous nations are his peculiar care, and under his immediate protection; that he counsels their counsellors, and teaches their senators wisdom; that he goes forth with their armies, and covers them in the day of battle, and brings them home crowned with victory and peace.

Notwithstanding the general consent of men to this truth, that virtue is the true foundation of the happiness and prosperity of public societies, yet they differ much in opinion and practice in the choice and pursuit of happiness for themselves: and yet there is no doubt but that the same thing which is necessary to the happiness of a kingdom, is also necessary to the happiness of private families and private men; unless we can suppose that the body politic may be in a very florishing condition, whilst every member of it is in misery and distress. As a nation cannot be said to be healthy, when the private families of which it consists are visited with plague and pestilence; so neither can it be said to be rich and happy, when the members are poor and miserable: from whence it follows that whatever is necessary to the public happiness is necessary also to the private happiness of particulars, considered in themselves, and in the more contracted relations of life.

Since then we have the express consent of all men that virtue is the true way to public happiness, we have, in consequence, their confession that private happiness must be obtained in the

same method: how is it then that men are so inconsistent with themselves, as in their own case to prefer the momentary pleasures of vice to the solid happiness which arises from virtue? How come they to think that the same thing which will make all others miserable, will make them happy?

This difference arises not from the nature of the things under consideration, which continue always the same without alteration, but from the passions of men, which in one case are excluded, and admitted in the other with all their force to bias the judgment. When we consider what is good for other men, their passions have no weight on our understandings, and we deliberate calmly what is right for them; but when we consider for ourselves, all our passions are awakened, and often prove too strong for our reason and understanding. The people are happy, you say, who are observers of justice, temperance, and chastity. Very well: and why would it not be as happy for you to observe the same rule as it is for them? Can reason, do you think, show a difference in the case? No: but when a man judges for himself, he can lay aside his reason and give himself up to his passions and corrupt inclinations. It is a common observation, that it is much easier to give good instructions than to follow them; and there is much truth in the observation: but this ought to be no prejudice to the cause of virtue; for when a man speaks reason at the same time that he acts against it, he ought to be taken as a strong witness for the truth.

A reason may be demanded perhaps, why we prefer the judgment of a man when he chooses happiness for others, to the judgment he makes when he chooses for himself. Do we not know that men are always truest to themselves, and never more sincere than when their own interest and happiness are concerned? Should a number of men consent to a law for suppressing vice and immorality, and yet indulge themselves in the very enjoyments which they forbid to others; whatever we may think of their opinion concerning the expediency of virtue to the public, yet we must not suppose them to judge that life may be rendered comfortable and happy by the practice of virtue; since such an opinion would be utterly inconsistent

with the measures which they pursue in order to their own happiness.

But if this way of arguing is allowed, there is but one law for man and for beasts: reason makes no difference in the case; for the happiness of both consists in the mere gratifications of sense: a conclusion so absurd, that there is no man unreasonable enough to embrace it. When a sickly and vitiated appetite craves unwholesome food, who is in the right? the patient, who is eager to gratify his appetite, or the physician, who stands between him and the deadly experiment, and prescribes safer, though less grateful remedies? The case is the same in the comparison between virtue and vice: the sensual man has a continual fever on him; and we can no more judge what will render a man truly happy by observing the choice he makes for himself, than we can learn the true cure of a disease by observing the cravings of a distempered appetite. If sense only is to be judge of the true measures of human happiness, in vain is it that we have reason given us for our direction; it can serve only to increase our shame; for a brute without reason is a much more honorable creature than a brute with it.

But we have no reason to decline the comparison between the pleasures of vice and the calm enjoyments of virtue: let us therefore take a nearer view of the two conditions, and see whether there be no reason to wish that we may live the life of the righteous, as well as to die his death.

As to the good things of life, the wicked can make out no peculiar title to them: riches and honors may be held and enjoyed by the righteous as well as the wicked. They differ indeed extremely in the use they make of the good things of the world: and this being the only difference in this respect, the only question in this view is, whether a man is happier in the enjoyment of a large fortune, when he applies it to the purposes, and uses it within the bounds of virtue, or when he makes it subservient to all the ends and pleasures of vice? Or if you remove the fortune out of the case, and carry the comparison into another condition of life, the question then will be, whether the difficulties of life which attend on mean circumstances, are more tolerable to a virtuous or a vicious man; and which of

the two can produce the best supports against the outward evils common to both?

If we allow the vicious man to have a greater share of sensual gratifications, we allow him at once all the advantage he can claim for himself; and since he best knows how pleasant such enjoyments are, let him set his own value on them. But though we allow him to rate his own pleasures according to his own lust and relish of them, yet his taste will not enable him to judge of the happiness or unhappiness of those who deny themselves the same liberties. It is the virtuous man's business not only to abstain from the pleasures of vice, but to subdue the passions of it; and when he has done so, he renders himself capable of much nobler enjoyments, which are a perpetual fund of delight and satisfaction to his mind. So that, take the men in conjunction with their desires and appetites, and there is reason to believe that, even with respect to the present enjoyments of life, virtue has infinitely the advantage over vice.

But if we look into the consequences of their different ways of living, such consequences only I mean as a little time produces and makes manifest to the eyes of the world, the case will grow to be very clear. View the persons in themselves: on one side you may see health and vigor attending on virtue; on the other, pains and diseases following close at the heels of vice. But if you look still nearer, and examine their states of mind, the difference will appear yet greater: on one side you may see an undisturbed reason, surrounded with a constant calm serenity, and enjoying itself in all the prospects that are presented to it by things past, present, and to come: on the other side are disturbed imaginations, eager desires, perpetual uneasiness, reflexions half stifled, and a mind ever laboring with unpleasant thoughts of the time past, and the more unwelcome prospects of the time to come. These are natural and constant effects; and such they are surely in which the happiness of human life is very much concerned. You may value the pleasures of the body as you please, and despise the better part, the mind; but you are a reasonable creature whether you will or no, and your reason will have the last influence in making you either happy or miserable. If you lay in matter for uneasy thoughts and reflexions, it is but storing up misery for yourself, a misery from

which all the real or fancied goods of the world cannot deliver you. The pains of the mind are never-ceasing torments: the wounds of the body may be cured; but for the wounds of the spirit the world affords no salve; they will fester and grow desperate, till they waste both body and mind. The truest touchstone by which we can prove the things which are conducive to our happiness, is to consider how they will operate on our minds for the remainder of our life: for instance, you have an opportunity of getting some great advantage by doing some vile thing: whilst you look only at the advantage, and think over all the ways in which it may be serviceable to your pleasure or ambition, so long the temptation may be strong; but set it at a little distance from you, and the case will be altered. Suppose the thing done and the advantage gained; and then put yourself into a posture of looking back on the whole transaction, and see what comfort will arise from the reflexion: can you rejoice in the sight of woods and parks, if every sight of them must call to your mind an innocent man whom you ruined in order to obtain them? Such a thought must ever be attended with a secret abhorrence of ourselves; and how happy the man is who lives under a continual displeasure with himself, let any one judge.

This secret displeasure, which wicked men conceive against themselves, is inconsistent with any real enjoyment: so that sin lays the foundation of misery, and lays it so close to us that we can never remove it. Add to this, that vice renders men odious and contemptible, not only to themselves, but to all the world besides. There is so much sense of virtue left, and will be as long as men continue to be reasonable creatures, that, whether we like it for ourselves or no, we must needs like it for all others: and therefore a vicious man will always be a contemptible man; a circumstance that will always make him an unhappy man; for it is impossible for a man to bear contempt easily, when he knows that he deserves it. So that consider the wicked man as he stands with regard to himself and his own judgment, and as he stands with regard to the world and the common opinion of mankind, and in both views he seems given up to misery, and to be the object of his own and the common hatred.

But there is still another scene to be opened, which will present us with a larger prospect, and show us far greater miseries in reserve for the wicked. Hitherto we have considered his case with respect only to this world and the natural effects of his vice; but ask him, and he will tell you that this is but an imperfect description of his condition; that he has other fears about him, and such forebodings of future misery as are sufficient to poison all the pleasures of life, were they free from all other corruption. He sees that in this life all things come to an end, that the wicked and the righteous equally go down to the grave; but what new distinctions may arise hereafter, answerable to the natural hopes and fears of the mind, he hates to remember, and yet has it not in his power to forget. These thoughts are his perpetual plague: no sooner is a passion satisfied, and the pleasure over, but it appears again in a ghastly form, and speaks to him in the language of Israel's King, 'Know, that for all these things God will call thee into judgment.'

Say, however, and it is all that the wicked have to say, that such imaginations may be delusive, and such fears may be vain; but yet, weak as you suppose these fears to be, we must be much weaker than we are, before we can get rid of them; that is, we must lose our reason and understanding, before we can forget that there is a God who will judge the world in righteousness. These are natural thoughts, the plain result of that reason which is born with us; and be they true or be they false, they have a real effect on our present happiness; and if they are true, as I trust we shall all one day be convinced that they are, they will add eternity to the misery of the wicked.

We meet sometimes with such hardened sinners as are proof for many years against all considerations of this sort; but their hardness is no security to them against the misery of these natural reflexions: vice will soon impair their strength and bring down the pride of their hearts; at least time will bring them within sight of the grave; and when weakness and infirmities lay hold on them, or death draws near to execute his commission, they awake as one out of a dream, and their long silenced fears begin to speak with double terror. And what a condition is a man in, when there is nothing past that he can

reflect on without self-condemnation, nothing to come that he can contemplate without horror and distraction of mind? Inquire of him in this condition, what profit there is in the pleasures of vice? Ask him, whether the fears of futurity are all idle dreams? And as you like his answer, follow his example.

It is a vain attempt to describe the misery of a sinner, who lies expiring with all his senses about him: the imagination cannot furnish ideas strong enough to paint out this scene of woe; and the experience of it may we never know!

There is in all men a natural aversion to death: the best are not free from it: but this is an evil that has its remedy. Thought and reflexion will furnish us with many arguments to balance against this fear: a trust in God, and a comfortable expectation of a happy futurity, will enable us to perform the last act with applause, and to give up ourselves with courage and with joy into the hands of our Redeemer. By these supports the righteous man, after a life of solid comfort, may find comfort too in his death, and wait with patience and tranquillity for that summons which he trusts and believes will call him to perpetual joys.

Could we but rightly balance this difference between the wicked and the righteous in their latest hours, it would sufficiently determine which has made the happier choice: but take the whole together; consider the wicked man in his life and in his death, how he lives despised by himself, and contemned by the world, without thinking of God, or thinking of him with dread, and at last expires under the utmost torments and agonies of mind, and we shall feel great reason to join in the petition of the text, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.'

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE LVIII.

PSALM CXIX.—VERSE 165.

In the exposition and self-application of this and such like texts, men are apt to commit two great mistakes; which, though very different in kind, are in their consequences equally fatal and pernicious. On the one hand they think that they cannot place too great a reliance on the promise of the text; easily persuaded that the general name of peace comprehends whatever the world calls good: and because that on which they fix their most sanguine affections, is what the world places in competence and health, they fondly conclude that the promise of peace infers the promise of these good things, which they esteem the genuine and necessary effects of peace. On the other hand, to secure their title to these things, they consider the condition to which they are annexed in quite a different view; employing all their force to limit and expound away the rigor of this article, and to show how easily, and on how small a portion of righteousness and obedience a man may be included among those denoted by the text. There they make all reasonable allowances to themselves through the great perfection of the law, which renders it hard to practise; through their own weakness so liable to offend, and through the mercy of God, which will incline him to accept the will for the deed. These deductions being made in the proportion which best suits their own will and condition, they easily find themselves within the articles of the text, and therefore expect the annexed promises, to which they think they have so good a claim. But as error naturally produces error and falsehood, so these mistakes

are exceedingly fruitful, and directly lead men to misapprehensions of God, of themselves, and of religion: for as long as men conceive prosperity and the enjoyment of it necessarily to attend virtue and holiness, they will judge of their attainments in religion, and of God's favor towards them, by what they enjoy: hence the spiritual pride and presumption of rich and prosperous men, who esteem their fortune as the reward of their virtue; hence the desponding imagination of poor and miserable men, who look on their misery to be their punishment, and the forerunner of their condemnation. It is needless to speak of the pernicious consequences of the kind allowances which men make to their own vices and imperfections, whilst they labor to crowd into the number of those who love the law: for if they are once persuaded that a little religion will serve their turn, it is not likely they will take pains to obtain more than they judge necessary. To avoid these inconveniences, it is necessary to consider, I. the nature of the peace spoken of in the text: II. who they are who may be said to *love the law of God:* III. to illustrate and confirm the truth of the proposition in the text. And, I. the Psalmist plainly makes this observation on his own personal experience and many trials; but yet even thus he does not set forth the splendid glories which he enjoyed during his reign; though he ought to have done this, had he intended to infer that worldly peace, security, and health, were the sure rewards of holiness and obedience. His life offered as ample matter for such an observation as any man's. He was specially raised by providence from obscurity to the throne of Israel, and his life was specially guarded by heaven: his glory likewise was darkened, and his afflictions were sore; but on his repentance the clouds dispersed, and he grew happy as he grew obedient: yet so far is the Psalmist from considering these circumstances of his outward glory, and thence making a general rule, that in the text he regards only the inward peace he enjoyed during his

afflictions, which peace in the severest trials he found to be the undivided companion of faith and obedience: this topic enlarged on. Nothing therefore was more distant from the Psalmist's thoughts, than to promise outward peace or temporal prosperity to the practice of virtue; since he speaks only of the peace of the righteous in their afflictions; he therefore adds, *and nothing shall offend them;* which would have been improper, had he spoken of temporal peace before, in which there is nothing to offend any man. But to enjoy a peace which sets us above the power of evil or fortune, which opens our eyes to look through the gloomiest scenes of sorrow to the blessed hope of future glory, this is what the world cannot give; and this is the peace which the Psalmist speaks of as the peculiar inheritance of him who loveth the law of God. But it requires pains, labor, and watchfulness over the affections and appetites of the flesh, before we can love what intirely thwarts them: it is not enough to love the law in admiration, and to obey it faintly; our love must be active and fruitful, and satisfied only in the enjoyment of its righteousness: all which will more fully appear under the second head. In this psalm we find holy David often declaring how much he loved the law of God. May we therefore from his character safely draw the picture of a man who loves the law of God? No: for David was a different man at different times: this point enlarged on. He blessed God for his afflictions, and soon afterwards he acknowleged the mercy and goodness of God in thus afflicting him: what David therefore in himself condemned when he loved the law of God, is inconsistent with the character of one who loves it: the excuses of sinners drawn from the worst part of the character of David and of other holy men, are a vain and imaginary comfort; but there is a comfort to be drawn from hence: these examples are a great encouragement to repentance, since we see how readily God embraced the returning prodigal; but whilst men use them to

soothe their consciences in the quiet enjoyment of sin, they abuse God's mercy in setting forth these instances of his patience. Yet though the example of David be not intirely a safe direction to us, his inspired writings are; and in this psalm we may find the righteous man's character, (1-3.) The first good thing he says of himself is his repentance, (59-60.) His next step was to forsake his wicked companions, and associate with such as feared the Lord, (63.) Next he resolves to persevere in holiness, (111-112.) He then describes his sense of religion, that source of peace and joy in his bitterest afflictions, which, in the text, he comprehends under the general term of loving the law, (161-164.) From all this we may see that to hate and abhor sin, to love and delight in the law of God, are expressions implying no small degree of perfection: this point enlarged on. There are some who on different views, such as are suggested merely by fear, interest, or present conveniency, keep out of sin, and make a tolerable show in the performance of their religious duties; but alas! their work is labor and sorrow: such persons are fond of every pretence which may help to ease them of any part of their duty, and excuse or protect them when under it; whereas they who delight in the law of God want not to be excused from the work in which they take pleasure; nor do they wish the approaches to sin to be made easy, since they have no appetite to embrace the monster, which is their aversion. Hence St. John, in one of his epistles, has given us this mark to know whether we love God or no; *his commandments are not grievous.* This text explained, showing that the connexion between the love of the law and of God was evidently in the Psalmist's view; since he affirms of one, what, properly speaking, belongs to the other: this case fully laid out. Nor is it to be imagined that when the Psalmist penned the text, his thoughts were exalted no higher than to a stoical rapture in praise of virtue; or that he fetched his comfort from such uncertain and disputed principles: no; his mind

was fixed on God, *from whom cometh our salvation*, and in whom alone the faithful have peace for ever. That this is the foundation which he builds on will appear, when we consider, III. how little peace of mind worldly enjoyments afford; this every man in his own condition knows, though inexperienced in the pleasures of the station above him. So that, allowing men to judge according to their knowlege, all must agree that there is no lasting peace to be had from the pleasures of this life, no security in them against affliction, no comfort under present evils, no assurance against future ones: and even if there be some enjoyment, it is imperfect, and liable to interruptions, unless supported by the hopes of religion: this point enlarged on, from a consideration of the unchanging nature of man, and his mind always looking forward beyond the limits of this world. So that, however valuable the world may be, something else is wanting to calm our fears, and raise the hopes for futurity; and this nothing but religion can do, which alone intitles us to God's protection. Having the assurance of this, we stand on an immoveable rock, against which the winds and waves vainly spend their fury: this is what we call a good conscience: this topic enlarged on, showing that when we are thus armed, and can without reserve profess the sentiment, *I have loved thy law, O God, and my delight hath been therein*, we shall be superior to all the evils of life. That which fills the breast of the worldly man with horror, gives us ease and comfort: when he thinks how soon he must give an account to God, his blood retires to his heart, and hardly there maintains its post: but to the good man this thought so fills his mind, that lost in pleasure and delight, he forgets all the pains and calamities of life: this point illustrated by the example of the holy martyrs. Concluding remarks.

DISCOURSE LVIII.

PSALM CXIX.—VERSE 165.

Great peace have they which love thy law.

In expounding this and such-like passages of Scripture, and in applying them to themselves, men are apt to commit two great mistakes; which, though they are of a very different kind, in their consequences are equally fatal and pernicious. On one hand, they think they can never sufficiently enlarge the promise of the text, or build too great expectations on the assurances of peace that are given to them; easily suffering themselves to be persuaded that under the general name of peace is to be comprehended whatever the world calls good: and because the peace which they most affect, and which most strongly possesses their imaginations, is that which the world supposes to be placed in power and affluence, in an easy fortune, and a healthy body, they fondly conclude that the promise of peace infers the promise of these good things, which they esteem as the genuine and necessary effects of peace. On the other hand, to strengthen and secure their title to these things, which they so passionately admire, they consider the condition to which the promise of peace is annexed in quite a different view. Here all their force is employed to limit and restrain, and to expound away the rigor of this article, and to show on how easy terms, on how small a portion of righteousness and obedience, a man may be numbered with those who love the law of God, and to whom the assurances of peace are given. Under this head they make very reasonable allowances to themselves on account of the great perfection of the law, which renders it extremely hard to practise; on account of their own weakness and infirmities, through which they can

hardly avoid often mistaking, and often offending against the law; and on account of the mercy of God, which will incline him to overlook their errors, and to accept their general good meaning, and their imperfect performance, for righteousness and holiness. After these deductions are made in the proportion that best pleases them, and that best suits their own condition, they can without difficulty find themselves to be within the articles of the peace which the text promises; and then they are in eager expectation of being put into the possession of those good things, to which they think they have so well made out their title.

But as error naturally produces error and falsehood, so these mistakes are in their kind exceedingly fruitful, and directly lead men to misapprehensions of God, themselves, and religion: for as long as men conceive the peace and prosperity of the world, and the enjoyments of it, to be necessary attendants on virtue and holiness, they will be apt to judge of their own attainments in religion, and of the favor of God towards them, according to the measure of the good things which they enjoy in this life: which can serve only to fill rich men and prosperous men with spiritual pride and presumption, whilst they esteem their fortune as the reward of their virtue; and poor men and miserable men with desponding fears and horror of mind, whilst they look on their misery to be their punishment, and the sure forerunner of their condemnation.

As to the kind allowances which men make to their own vices and imperfections, whilst they labor to crowd into the number of those who love the law, I need not say of what pernicious consequence they are: if men are once persuaded that little religion will serve their turn, a little shall serve it; it is not likely that those who take pains to convince themselves and others that a small degree of righteousness is sufficient for all the ends of religion, should be so little of a piece with themselves as to take pains to obtain more than what they judge to be necessary. So that these candid interpretations of the conditions of religion seem to lead to as candid a compliance with the modes and fashions of the world; and the same good inclinations which tempt men to expound away one half of their duty, will as easily tempt them to forget or neglect the other.

To avoid these inconveniences then it is necessary to consider,

First, the nature of the peace here spoken of in the text.

Secondly, who they are that may be said to 'love the law of God.' And,

Thirdly, to illustrate and confirm the truth of this proposition, 'Great peace have they which love thy law.'

First, then, it is necessary to consider the nature of the peace here spoken of in the text.

It is plain the Psalmist makes this observation on the experience of his own circumstances and condition, and the many trials he had of the favor and protection of God; and yet to come at this conclusion he does not set forth the great state and splendor of his kingdom, or the triumphs and glories of his reign, or describe any circumstances of the outward and worldly prosperity he enjoyed; which yet he ought to have done, had he intended to infer that worldly peace and security, and an exemption from the pains and evils of life, were the never-failing blessings and reward of holiness and obedience. His life perhaps offered as ample matter to build such an observation on as any man's whatever: he was, by the spe .. appointment of Providence, drawn out of obscurity, and raised to the throne of Israel: his life, often attempted by men, was as often guarded by heaven; and the dangers to which he was exposed served but to convince him how much he was the care of the Almighty. When prosperity weakened his virtue, and at last betrayed him into the crying sins of murder and adultery, he suffered not only under the lashes of a guilty conscience, and the torments of a wounded spirit, but was humbled likewise under the afflicting hand of Providence: his glory was darkened, and his afflictions were many and sore. On his repentance the clouds again dispersed; and he grew happy, as he grew obedient. Thus it seemed good to God to deal with him: but so far is the Psalmist from considering these circumstances of outward glory, and making a general rule from his own case, that in the text he regards only that peace which he felt and enjoyed during the course of his afflictions and persecutions; which peace he found was the undivided companion of faith

and obedience in all, even the most afflicting circumstances of life. Do but mind what steps he takes to come at the conclusion of the text: he sets out with describing the evil treatment he met with in the world; 'Princes,' says he, 'have persecuted me without a cause:' in the next place, he declares what it was that sustained him under these persecutions; 'But my heart,' says he, 'standeth in awe of thy word: I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil: I hate and abhor lying; but thy law do I love. Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.' This love of the law of God, this constancy in the discharge of his duty, he found was a perpetual spring of joy and comfort in his mind, amidst all the varieties and unpromising circumstances of life: and this leads him to sing the triumphs of virtue and religion in this exalted strain; 'Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.'

From hence it is evident that nothing was more distant from the Psalmist's thoughts, than to promise outward peace or temporal prosperity to the practice of virtue; since he speaks of that peace only which the righteous enjoy in the day of their affliction; and for this reason he adds, 'and nothing shall offend them;' which would have been very improperly added, had he spoken of temporal peace before, in which there is nothing apt to offend any man; and therefore not to be offended at it is no peculiar prerogative, or just distinction of the righteous man's tranquillity. But to enjoy a peace which sets us above the power of evil; which places us out of the reach of fortune; which inspires us with courage in the midst of danger; which opens our eyes to look through the gloomiest scenes of sorrow to the blessed hope of future glory; which establishes our hearts in a patient expectation of God's deliverance, so that nothing can terrify or dismay us; is that which the world can never give, and which can only proceed from the blessed Spirit of God, whose province it is to confirm the faithful to the end, and so to arm their faith, that 'nothing can offend them.'

This is that peace of which the Psalmist speaks, and which is the peculiar lot and inheritance of the righteous, of him who loveth the law of God. Great is the gift, and happy is the

man who can attain to it: but it requires pains and labor, and a constant watchfulness over ourselves, to prepare our hearts to receive so noble a guest; for as long as we carry this flesh and blood about us, and have the affections and appetites of it to incite us to evil, the solicitations of pleasure to move us to worldly enjoyments, the temptations of honor and interest to shake our integrity, so long it must be difficult to us to resign our wills to the conduct of the law of God, and intirely to love what intirely thwarts the bent and inclination of our corrupted nature: for it is not enough so only to love the law as to approve and admire it, and to pursue the righteousness of it with faint desires and distant wishes, which is such a love as every self-condemned sinner has for it; but our love must be active and fruitful in the works of the law, and satisfied with nothing less than the possession and enjoyment of the holiness and righteousness which the law prescribes. And this will more fully appear under the second head; which was,

To consider who they are who may be said to 'love the law of God.'

In this Psalm we often find holy David declaring how much he loved the law of God: 'In thy law,' says he, 'is my delight: I have chosen thy precepts: my soul hath kept thy testimonies, and I love them exceedingly: I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold:' I trust in thy word: I have hoped in thy judgments:' and many other like expressions, full of regard and affection to the laws of God, occur frequently. David then loved the law of God: may we therefore, from his character, safely draw the picture of a man who loves the law of God? By no means; for though at the time of penning this Psalm his heart was right with God, yet at other times he had highly provoked and grievously offended him. David was a different man at different times; and when he was a lover of the law of God, he heartily condemned and lamented what he was before, and blessed God for visiting him with such afflictions as served to awaken his conscience, and make him see and forsake the errors of his ways. Thus, in this very Psalm, he confesses, 'Before I was afflicted I went astray;' and immediately after, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes:' and soon

after he acknowleges the mercy and goodness of God to him in afflicting him, 'I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.' What therefore David in himself condemned when he loved the law of God, cannot be thought to be consistent with the character of one who loves the law of God. It is a vain and imaginary comfort therefore which sinners raise to themselves out of the worst part of the character of David and other holy men; endeavoring, by their example, partly to defend and partly to excuse their sins. There is a comfort, indeed, which sinners may draw from hence: these examples are a great encouragement to repentance and the forsaking of sin; since here they may see how readily God embraced the returning prodigal. From hence they may hope, though their sins be red as scarlet, yet shall they be washed white as snow; though they, like David, are grievous sinners, yet, like him, may they become lovers and beloved of God, if, like him, they repent and condemn their iniquities. This is the instruction which the Scripture holds forth to us in these examples: but as long as men make use of them to sooth and flatter their consciences in the quiet enjoyment of sin, so long do they abuse the goodness and mercy of God in setting forth to us these instances of his patience and long-suffering towards sinners.

But though the example of David in all parts of it is no safe direction to us, yet his inspired writings are; and we need go no farther than this Psalm for the righteous man's character: in the very beginning of it he describes him to be a man 'undefiled in the way, who walks in the law of the Lord, who keeps his testimonies, and seeks him with the whole heart; who does no iniquity.' In speaking of himself, the first good thing he found to say was his repentance: this was his first step towards becoming a lover of God: 'I thought,' says he, 'on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies: I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.' His next step was to forsake his wicked companions, and to associate with such as feared the Lord: 'I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.' The resolutions he had formed of persevering in holiness he thus expresses: 'Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: I have

inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes always to the end.' In the verses before the text, and where he is describing that sense of religion which was the source of all the peace and joy which he found amidst his bitterest persecutions and afflictions, and which afterwards, in the words of the text, he comprehends under the general term of loving the law, he thus speaks: 'My heart standeth in awe of thy word: I rejoice at thy word: I hate and abhor lying: seven times a day do I praise thee.'

You see then what firm resolutions of obedience, how constant a perseverance in holiness, how regular and frequent acts of devotion, how irreconcilable a hatred to sin and wickedness, must meet together to complete the character of the man who loves the law of God. To hate and abhor sin, to love and delight in the law of God, are expressions which imply no small degree of perfection: they suppose the main difficulties of religion to be conquered, the struggle with sin to be over, the passions and affections to be subdued to holiness and obedience, and a man's heart to be in the interest of virtue, and to lead the way to all the good he does. There are some who, on different views, such as are suggested merely by fear, or by interest, or present conveniency, keep out of sin, and make a tolerable show in the performance of the duties of religion: but alas! their work is labor and sorrow; they have no pleasure or relish in what they are about; and so far from tasting the peace which the Psalmist speaks of, that religion is their toil and slavery, the work of a master whom they cannot love, and whom they dare not anger, and whom therefore they serve unwillingly, without cheerfulness or delight. These are they who are fond of every pretence which may help to ease them of any part of their duty; whose hearts are perpetually pleading the cause of sin, and inventing and maintaining all the excuses which may in any wise serve to cover and protect it: whereas they who delight in the law of God, whose hearts are seasoned with an honest undesigning virtue, want not to be excused from the work they take pleasure in. They who hate and abhor sin want not to have the approaches to it made easy, or cleared from dangers, since they have no appetite to embrace the monster, which is their aversion.

Hence it is that St. John, in one of his Epistles, has given this mark to know whether we love God or no; 'His commandments are not grievous.' If we like the work, and take pleasure in obedience, it is the best evidence that we love the Master; but it is not to be thought that we love him, as long as we hate and repine at his service. And this connexion between the love of the law and the love of God was evidently in the Psalmist's view; since he affirms of one what, properly speaking, belongs to the other: for the peace and joy which good men feel arise from the love of God, from a sure trust and confidence in his favor, from an unshaken hope of inheriting his promises, if they faint not when they are tried. It is this only which can make them triumph in the evil which virtue exposes them to, which can give them peace amidst all the tumults of the world, and preserve the harmony of their souls when all things are out of course, and maintain the tranquillity of their minds even whilst nature is dissolving in them.

It is not to be imagined that, when the Psalmist penned the text, his thoughts were no higher exalted than to a Stoical rapture in praise of virtue; or that he fetched his comfort from such uncertain, such disputed principles: no; his mind was fixed on God, 'from whom cometh our salvation,' and in whom alone the faithful have peace and rest for evermore. This is the foundation he builds on, as will appear,

Thirdly, where we are to illustrate and confirm the truth of this proposition, 'Great peace have they which love thy law.'

How little peace and satisfaction of mind the enjoyments of the world afford, every man in his own condition knows, what pleasures or comforts soever he may imagine there are in the conditions of life which are above him, and which he has never experienced: so that, allowing men to judge as far as their knowlege extends (which is but a reasonable confinement), there is but one opinion concerning the pleasures of the world, which men of all ranks and degrees consent in; that there is no lasting peace to be had from them, no security in them against sorrow and vexation, no comfort under present evils, nor any assurance against future. But were there that enjoyment in all conditions, which most men think there is in some, yet still it would be very imperfect, and liable to frequent

interruptions, unless supported by hopes of religion; for as long as men continue to be of the same nature which they now are, so long their minds will be ever looking forward beyond the limits of this world, and foreboding to them the good or evil that attends them hereafter, when they shall be stripped of all their present supports and possessions. The pleasures of this life cannot sustain the spirit of a man against these apprehensions, but must lose their own heat by degrees, from the continual damps which will arise from such reflexions.

So that let the world be as valuable as it will, we dispute it not with you; yet something else is wanting to give peace to the mind, something that can calm the fears and raise the hopes for futurity; and this nothing but religion can do, which intitles us to his protection, before whom things past, present, and to come bow down and obey. If we have the assurance of his love and favor to us, nothing can disturb us; we stand on a rock, against which the winds and waves may spend their fury, but shall spend it in vain; for it is immoveable. This assurance of God's favor is but one and the same thing with what we call a good conscience: for what force is there in a good conscience to give us peace, but only this, that it is our testimony that we have faithfully and diligently served our God; which is the ground of our hope and confidence in him? And when we are thus armed, and can without reserve profess, 'I have loved thy law, O God, and my delight hath been therein;' we shall be superior to all the evils of life. The very circumstances which give terror to the worldly man, and fill his breast with horror, will give ease and comfort to us. When he thinks of the shortness of his life, and the speedy account he must give to God, his blood retires to his heart, and hardly there maintains its post: but when the good man's thoughts are so fixed, his heart springs with joy, and all his hopes begin to bloom: the prospect of that blessed day so fills his mind, and engages all his thought, that he is lost in pleasure and delight, and forgets all the pains and calamities of life; not the tyrant's frown, nor the executioner who waits for blood, can rob him of his peace: he looks on them as messengers sent by Providence to deliver him from his pain, and to carry him to the haven of his rest, where his soul longs to be. This, this only was the art by which the

saints and martyrs overcame the world, and looked on racks and gibbets, and every form of death, but as so many doors opening into the kingdom of rest and glory. By the same art still do good men triumph under all the trials of fortune : by this they preserve their peace in their latest hours, and resign with joy their spirits into his hand who gave them.

This is a trial which mortals must undergo : the time will come, and is now at hand, when we must part with all that our eyes delight to see, and when we must go to render an account to our great Judge : in that day, where shall we look for comfort, and whom shall we call to our assistance ? Your parting friends will have nothing but tears and sighs to lend you. Then happy is the man whose trust hath been in God : who can with patience, full of hope, wait the coming of his Lord, and observe with comfort the degrees by which he hastens to his end. It is worth your while to lay the foundation of this peace betimes, that you may be able to look that day in the face, at which, even at a distance, the stoutest heart may tremble : for it is not courage, but folly, not to think of death with some concern, since so much depends from that moment.

And were we sure of nothing else, in consequence of our faith and obedience, but to slip quietly out of the world, without suffering the agonies which guilty sinners feel, and which none can describe ; yet still our labor would not be quite in vain : but since this peace is but the forerunner of eternal peace, the earnest of future glory and immortality, it is worth all our pains to deny ourselves in this world, to take up our cross and follow Christ, to labor to do the whole will of God, that we may inherit that peace which belongs to those, and those only, ' who love the law of God.'

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE LIX.

PSALM CXIX.—VERSE 63.

NOTHING is more essential in the pursuit of holiness, and indeed in the whole conduct of our lives, than to observe how those who are set forth by the holy Scripture as patterns, attained to that perfection which made them shining lights of the world and declared favorites of God. If from such examples we draw rules for our own use, we shall be sure of two great advantages; viz. that these rules will be proper and practicable; practicable, because drawn from the practice of men like ourselves; proper, because we aim at the same end which good men before us have attained to by the use of those means which experience has already found to be proper. The division of the Psalm containing the text sets before us the several steps by which David recovered himself from the sin in which he had been involved. First, he declares his choice, and his resolution to pursue that choice, (57.) This he knew by experience he could do only by the assistance of God, which he therefore applies for, (58.): then he diligently examines his heart, and forms resolutions which he immediately puts into practice, (59. 60.); to secure all this, there was need of patience and courage, and faith towards God. The way of life is beset with dangers; we must therefore be prepared to endure hardships, like good soldiers of Christ; he therefore mentions for our learning, steadfastness under trials, (61.): he then resolves on a continued devotion towards God, (62.): next follows the text. At first sight this seems but a little thing to mention, after so many attainments spoken of before: what should lead him so low as to add

that he was careful to keep good company? Nothing but his own experience had taught him that this was the great preservative of all his other attainments, without which they would soon waste away, and leave him once more an easy prey to the allurements of vice: this point enlarged on, showing how he, being led away by evil company, had almost perished but for the intervention of God. So sensible was he of this danger, that he not only resolved to avoid it himself, but made it his early care to forewarn his son of it; which made such an impression on him, that he, speaking on the same topic, being full of the image of his father when he delivered the instruction, introduces him as giving advice to him, his son, (Prov. iv. 1-4.); and again, (14. 15.) But why, you will say, look far for an advice so obvious, and an instruction which all parents give to their children as well as David? It is true they do; for which reason it is looked on as advice fit only for children; and young people hardly think themselves men till all restraints are broken from, and they can with impunity choose the worst of company for themselves. But to remove this prejudice against the advice implied in the text, we must consider that though David gave this instruction betimes to his son, yet even in after life, though improved in holiness, he laid it down as a rule for his own conduct, a security to his virtue, and defence of his innocence, (115.) He hardly thought it practicable to associate with evil doers, and yet keep the commandments of God; as is plain from the reason which he gives after, *Depart from me, ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God:* which would be no reason, were it not morally impossible to keep the commandments of God without departing from evil doers. Men in a state of trial cannot safely expose themselves unnecessarily to the constant insinuations of wicked men. The reasonableness of the Psalmist's practice described in the text, and of the rule therein implied, must proceed from a consideration of the great danger of keeping ill company, and the great

advantage of contracting friendships with the good. But before this argument is entered into, it is to be observed that none are concerned in it but such as have a sense of religion and a due regard to virtue: such as have no regard for these are not concerned in it; nor will it be hard to convince the former of their great danger in contracting friendships with men who have prostituted their minds and bodies to the service of sin. For, first, let it be considered that none of our resolutions to keep clear from the pollutions of the company we keep, can give us any security for preserving our innocence: they are often carried into bad company, but seldom or never come off unimpaired; for their foundation being undermined, they themselves must fall to ruin. Resolutions made against sin, because of its heinousness and evil consequences, wear off by conversing with those who have learned to make a mock of sin. When once we come to relish this subject, it is but an easy step to practise what we thus far approve of: nor is it a hard matter to imagine that our fears are but the prejudices of education; and from the example of our friends our treacherous heart will say to us, Behold they sin, and no evil happeneth unto them: this whole point enlarged on, showing that thus seduced we fall asleep in the arms of pleasure, never perhaps to wake, till the last trumpet calls us with all our sins into the presence of God. Secondly: supposing that all these circumstances should not meet to complete our ruin, yet the opportunities for sin which an evil acquaintance affords, are of themselves great temptations: the virtue of men is not always equally strong; and it is the happiness of those who are unacquainted with the ways of wickedness, even when most tempted, to be ignorant how to sin. This guard we lose in the society of wicked men: this point enlarged on, showing how ready they are to second our temptations in order that they may triumph in our fall, and illustrated by the case of a person subject to violent passion, going into the company of one who would place arms in his hand, and rejoice to see the

extravagance of his fury. Thirdly: all acknowlege that there are difficulties in religion, even with all the assistance and advantages that may be had; the nature of the case requires this; for being here in a state of trial, and in order that we may give proof of our virtue, faith, and ready submission to God's will, if there were no difficulty, there would be no trial. Now knowing our all to depend on this trial, it must be extreme folly in any man to refuse any help that may make his work easy, or to expose himself to difficulties that may render its issue more uncertain; yet this every one does who lays himself open to the art and cunning, and deadly insinuations of evil men, industrious in the bad cause they serve: (Prov. iv. 16. 17.) These verses enlarged on, showing that when the fulness of meat and drink has driven out thought and care, there springs up a brutal courage, which neither fears God nor regards man. Even this sensual indulgence, independent of its consequences, exposes us to the wrath of God: *Riotous persons and drunkards shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* This crime is heightened by a kind of self-murder, destroying the man formed after God's image, and leaving him in a worse condition than a helpless beast of the field. Should you propose to share these enjoyments with the libertines, and guard against all other kinds and degrees of wickedness, yet even this is destructive of the hopes of religion. If you bring but a taste and relish with you for such pleasures, use and custom and example will soon make you a proficient; and you will be surprised too late at finding yourself lost in excesses which you never thought of. Your cheerful nights and succeeding heavy mornings will indispose you for thought and reflexion, and thus your sense of religion will gradually decay. This whole case beautifully laid out, showing how the former comforts of an innocent mind will yield to misgiving fears, and drive a man to desperate intemperance; and then nothing but the extraordinary grace of God can save him; and whether he deserves this, let any one judge. But the

mercies of God, like the sun, *rise on the evil and the good, on the just and the unjust.* Perhaps then he will awaken you once more to a sense of danger. This is the best thing that can befal you: but could you be sure of this, there is no encouragement in it to enter into the societies of wicked men; for even thus you little think what misery you are preparing for yourself. When immersed in sensuality, the gentle calls of the Spirit will not awaken you; rougher methods are then necessary: this point enlarged on, showing that the methods to be used for rousing a lethargic or apoplectic man, are to be employed in spiritual distempers: by such methods was David called back to himself: this case enlarged on. Yet the external evils and afflictions which we call down on ourselves, will be but a light part of our misery; for when at length we come to see nothing to keep us from everlasting ruin but our slender thread of life, what despair will possess our minds! This awful state enlarged on to the end.

DISCOURSE LIX.

PSALM CXIX.—VERSE 63.

I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

THERE is nothing more useful or necessary in the pursuit of virtue and holiness, and indeed in the whole conduct of our lives, than to observe the rules and methods by which men of approved righteousness, who are set forth to us as patterns and examples in holy Scripture, did attain to that perfection which made them the shining lights of the world, and the declared favorites of God. If therefore we look into such examples, and from thence draw rules for our own use, we shall be sure of two very great advantages; namely, that the rules we prescribe ourselves will be both proper and practicable: practicable, because drawn from the practice of men like ourselves; and proper, because we aim at no other end than that which good men before us have attained to by the use of these very means, and consequently, for the attaining of which these rules have already by experience been found to be proper.

This division of the 119th Psalm, from which the text is taken, sets before us the several steps by which David recovered himself from the sin in which he had been involved: in the first verse he declares his choice, 'Thou art my portion, O Lord;' and his resolution to pursue that choice, 'I have said that I would keep thy word:' this he knew by sad experience that he was not able to do without the assistance and support of God; and therefore the next step was to apply for his assistance, 'I intreated thy favor with my whole heart.' Having thus prepared himself, he set diligently to examine his heart, and to form resolutions, and immediately to put those resolutions

into practice: 'I thought on my ways; I turned my feet unto thy testimonies; I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.' This was a good beginning, and these very promising resolutions; but to secure them there was need of patience and courage, and faith towards God. The way that leads to life is narrow and beset with dangers: and we begin in vain, unless we are prepared to endure hardship like good soldiers of Christ. The next thing therefore he mentions, and which we are to learn from him, is steadfastness when we are tried: 'The bands of the wicked,' says he, 'have robbed me; but I have not forgotten thy law.' He then resolves on a constant and uninterrupted devotion towards God: 'At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous judgments.' After this follow the words of the text, 'I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.'

At first sight this seems to be but a little thing to mention, after so many great attainments spoken of before: after he had remembered his holy resolutions, his immediate and uninterrupted pursuit of them, his constancy and steadiness under affliction, his perpetual devotions, what should lead him to fall so low as to add, that he was careful to keep good company? What else could lead him to it but his own experience, which had taught him that this care was the great preservative of all his other attainments, without which they would soon waste away, and leave him once more an easy prey to the soft allurements of vice? He knew and had felt how great the contagion of ill company was; and therefore with reason adds, in the last place, that which was his greatest care, the avoiding the society of wicked and voluptuous men: a snare in which he had once already almost perished, and in which he had been intirely lost, had not God sent his afflicting angel to terrify and awaken his conscience, which was stupified with sensual pleasures, and sleeping the sleep of death. So sensible was the holy Psalmist of this danger, that he not only resolved for himself to avoid it, but made it his early care to forewarn his son of it; and such impressions did the repeated admonitions of his father make on the mind of Solomon, that in the book of Proverbs, when he comes to mention this necessary advice of shunning the company

of wicked and evil men, he no longer speaks in his own person, but being full of the image of his father when he delivered the instruction, introduces him giving the advice to him, his son; 'Hear, ye children,' says he, 'the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding: for I was my father's son, tender and only-beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words; keep my commandments, and live.' And soon after follows, among his father's precepts, this: 'Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.'

But what need is there, you will say, to look far for this advice, since it is of all others the most obvious, and an instruction which all parents give to their children as well as David? It is true they do; and for that reason it is commonly looked on as advice fit only for children: and young people hardly think themselves men till they have broke loose from all restraints of this kind, and shown the world that they are at liberty to choose the worst of company for themselves, without being called to an account for it. And this weak ambition of showing themselves to be men, and at their own disposal, every day betrays youth into such hands as lie in wait either for their souls or their estates; as if the only way they had to convince the world that they are in their own power, were to do that for themselves which every body knows no friend would do for them.

But to remove this prejudice against the advice implied in the text, I desire you would consider that though David gave this instruction betimes to his son, yet he himself, in his more advanced years, and under his greatest improvements in virtue and holiness, thought fit to lay it down for himself as a rule to be observed in the conduct of his life; as a great security to his virtue, and defence of his innocence and integrity: 'Depart from me,' says he, 'ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God:' ver. 115. He hardly thought it practicable to associate with evil doers, and yet to keep the commandments of God; as is plain from the reason he gives why he would have the evil depart from him; 'For,' says he, 'I will keep the commandments of my God:' which would be no rea-

son, were there not a moral impossibility of keeping the commandments of God, without departing from evil doers. As long as men are in a state of trial, that is, as long as they are in this life, they cannot arrive at such a pitch of perfection as may make it safe for them to expose themselves unnecessarily to the temptations of vice, and to the greatest of temptations, the constant insinuations of wicked men. The reasonableness of the Psalmist's practice described in the text, and of the rule therein implied, must be deduced from the consideration of the great danger of the contrary practice, in keeping ill company, and from the great advantage of contracting friendships with the good.

But before I enter into this argument, I must observe to you that none are concerned in it but such as have a sense of religion, and a due regard to virtue; for these are the two things in danger from ill company: and it is certain that such as have no regard either to virtue or religion are not within the reach of any arguments drawn from the dangers which threaten them. On this topic therefore I can only speak to such as have an awe of God, and a sense of their duty on their minds; and such I hope it will not be hard to convince of the great danger there is in contracting friendships and familiarities with men who have prostituted their minds and their bodies to the service of sin. For,

First, let it be considered that no resolutions which we can form to ourselves of keeping clear from the pollutions of the company we keep can give us any security of preserving our innocence and virtue: such resolutions are often carried into bad company, but seldom or never come off whole; for when the foundation on which such resolutions stand is undermined, they must necessarily fall to ruin. You resolve against sin, because you have a sense of the heinousness of it, and the evil consequences which attend it; but it is great odds but this wears off by constantly conversing with such as have learned to make a mock of sin, and can talk of their own and others' vices with a great deal of humor and raillery. When once you come to relish this subject, and to find sport and entertainment in that which ought to give you horror and aversion, it is but an easy step to practise what you thus far approve: and when once

you are giving way, and inclining to yield to the solicitations of vice, your evil genius will soon furnish you with many excuses, and many suggestions to encourage you. It will be no hard matter for you to imagine that your fears are the mere prejudices of education: and the example of your friends, who sin and fear not, will strengthen the imagination; and your heart, your treacherous heart will say to you, Behold they sin, and no evil happeneth unto them. Thus seduced and thus betrayed, you are left an easy prey to sin; your resolutions fall before the prevailing influences of pleasure, in the arms of which you fall asleep, perhaps never more to wake again to your sense and reason, till the last trumpet calls you, with all your sins, to stand before the judgment-seat of God. But farther,

Secondly, suppose all these unhappy circumstances should not meet to push on and complete your ruin; yet even the opportunities and advantages for sin which an ill acquaintance affords, are of themselves great temptations. Men are not always alike on their guard: their virtue is not at all times equally strong: and it is the happiness of good men, who are unacquainted with the ways of wickedness, that in their weakest state, when they are most tried with temptations, they want the skill and knowlege of sinning. This guard you certainly lose to your virtue and innocence by entering the societies of wicked men: they will always be ready to second your temptations, and make the way to sin easy and practicable: they will, as far as in them lies, prevent the preventing grace of God, and rob you of the benefit of it; they will watch your weakest hours that they may triumph in your fall, and have the malicious pleasure of seeing you become like one of them. Were I subject to sudden and violent efforts of passion, I would not venture myself in a man's company who I knew would clap a sword or a pistol into my hand in the height of my rage, and rejoice to see the mischief and extravagance of my fury: but this is the very choice which every man makes for himself, when he courts the friendships and acquaintance of wicked men. You are a man subject to passions and temptations; you have inclinations to evil, which you are not always sure of controlling; whenever they attack you, your best refuge is to reason, and thought, and prayer: why then will you put yourself into such hands which

you know will never suffer you to enjoy these advantages; which will leave you no time to think, but will drive you on to follow the present evil passion, till it raises a flame that will consume and destroy you?

Thirdly, it is on all hands acknowleged that there are many difficulties in the practice of religion, even when we call in all the assistance, and take in all the advantages that may be had: and in the nature of the thing it is necessary it should be so; since we are called here to a state of trial, to give proof of our virtue and faith, and ready submission to the will of God: in doing of which, if there were no difficulty there would be no trial. Now whoever considers this, and that on the consequence of this trial our hopes, our happiness, ourselves depend, must needs think it extreme folly in any man who shall refuse any helps that may be had towards making his work easy to him: or who shall voluntarily expose himself to any difficulties that may render the issue of his trial more doubtful and uncertain: and this every man confessedly does who lays himself open to the art and cunning, and deadly insinuations of evil men, who are industrious in the bad cause they serve; and as the wise king expresses it, 'They sleep not except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall: they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.' And if you partake in the bread and the wine, it will not be long before you take share in the wickedness and violence that procure them: for that which you esteem perhaps the most innocent employment of your companions, their living in splendor, and in all the delicacy of profuseness, and spending their time in luxurious ease and forgetfulness, leads naturally to all other excesses of vice and lewdness; for when the fulness of meat and drink has driven out thought and care, in the room of them there springs up a blind brutal courage, which neither fears God nor regards man.

Even this sensual indulgence, distinct from the mischievous consequences that attend it, is that which will expose us to the wrath and judgment of God: 'Riotous persons and drunkards' are numbered with those who 'shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven:' it is a crime that is heightened by a kind of self-murder, destroying the man which was formed after the

image and likeness of God; divesting him of sense and reason, and every thing else that was to distinguish him from the beasts of the field, and leaving him even in a worse condition than they, a mere helpless and useless carcass. What a life does that man lead, who wastes half his time in thinking only how he may be without thought the rest of the day! whose short mornings are spent in contriving the excesses of the night, and his waking hours employed in preparing himself for a new lethargy and the sleep of intemperance!

Should you therefore only propose to share these enjoyments with the libertines, and to keep a strict hand on yourself as to all other kinds and degrees of wickedness; yet even this is destructive of the hopes of religion. If you bring but a taste and relish with you for these pleasures, use and custom and example will soon make you a proficient: and you will wonder perhaps, when it is too late, to find yourself lost in such excesses as you never once thought of looking into. Your cheerful nights, and the heavy mornings which follow them, will indispose you for thought and reflexion; and the sense of religion, which lives and is nourished only by the exercise of thought and reason, will gradually decay: the comforts of an innocent mind which used to warm your soul with delight, and make it spring forth with joy into the contemplations of God and of futurity, will all forsake and leave you; and in the room of them will succeed misgiving fears and doubts, full of mistrust, evil suggestions, and jealous apprehensions of God and of yourself; till at last you are forced to fly for refuge to those repeated acts of intemperance, which at first you only tasted as transient diversions. And when once this comes to be the case, that you are afraid of yourself and your own thoughts, and forced to fly from the presence of your own mind, nothing can save you but the more than ordinary grace of God, which whether you will deserve or no, you yourself shall judge.

But the mercies of God are without measure, and like the sun, 'rise on the evil and the good, on the just and the unjust:' perhaps then he will look down on you, and awaken you once more to see your danger and the evil of your ways. This is the best thing which can befal you: but could you be sure of this, there is no encouragement in it to enter into the societies

of wicked and profligate men: for, alas! you little think what misery, even on this supposition, you are preparing for yourself: for when you are immersed in sensuality, the gentle and the kind calls of the Spirit will not awaken you; rougher methods are grown necessary, because your sense of feeling is too far gone to be affected with soft ones: fire and sharp knives can only reach the feeling of a man grown stupid in a lethargy or an apoplectic fit; and therefore they only must be applied. In spiritual distempers the same method is used by the wisdom of God: how was David called back to himself? By grievous afflictions and heavy judgments; by uncommon misfortunes, which only could raise him to see his wretched state: and is it worth our while, for any pleasures of sin, to make it necessary for God to send misery and affliction to dwell with us; to bring ourselves into so desperate a condition, as to want so desperate a remedy?

And yet the external evils and afflictions, which by these means we shall call down on ourselves, will be but one part, and a light part of our misery: for when we come with eyes open to see the danger of our condition, to behold hell gaping wide to receive us, and that there is nothing to keep us from present ruin but the slender thread of life on which we hang, what fears, what torment, nay, what despair will possess our minds! When we look back on the course we have run, and see with unprejudiced eyes the wickedness we have committed; when we number the nights and days spent in the service of sin, the injuries done to men, and the indignities offered to God; where shall we begin to repent, or with what courage shall we set about a work which seems too large to be compassed in the little time we have left ourselves to work in? And when we do begin, how unpleasant must the work be to us! with what confusion shall we lift up to heaven our offending hands and eyes! with what tremblings of heart implore the mercy we have long despised, and petition for that grace which often perhaps we have ridiculed and set up to be a sport for fools! Believe me, there is great difference in the religious work of an innocent, virtuous man, and of a returning sinner: and you cannot make a worse bargain for yourself than to sin on the prospect of repentance: no pleasures can recompense you for the change

you make. To approach the throne of God with filial confidence and joy, and to appear before it with the fear of self-condemned criminals, are very different states. None but those who have felt the sinner's pains, the remorse and anguish of mind which attend him in every step, can truly judge of this matter: and from such experience God defend us all!

On the whole then, since the danger of associating with wicked men is so evidently great; since we hazard nothing less by it than ourselves, our immortal souls, and all our hopes of future glory; and since, though we should recover from their snare, the consequences as to this world abound with certain pain and misery, and as to the next but with uncertain hopes; let us with holy David set ourselves to shun this danger, and with him resolve 'to be companions of them who fear the Lord and keep his precepts.'

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE LX.

II CORINTHIANS, CHAP. IV.—VERSE 18.

PART I.

THE motives to obedience in all religions are thus far the same, that they depend on the belief of another invisible world, and the different state of men in it: for though it has been urged, with some show of reason, that virtue is its own reward, and that man's chief happiness would consist in the practice of it, independent of any other rewards, yet this, even if true, is far too narrow a foundation to build religion on; as it would only influence men of abstracted thought and reason. The generality of mankind live by sense, and take their measures of happiness, not from the remote conclusions of reason, but from their present feeling, and from the impressions which they receive from their daily intercourse with men and things; and the rewards and punishments of religion are calculated to this sense and feeling, excepting only that they are distant, and incapable of being made the present objects of sense; and therefore they operate so weakly on the minds and affections of men. Herein lies the advantage of the things of this world, that the man of thought and reflexion cannot but see them, while the man of no thought sees nothing else: hence the distinction made by the Apostle in the text. In this lies all the force and strength of worldly temptations and pleasures; for were the enjoyments of this world and those of the next equally remote, there could be no competition between them. This most men would find to be true, would they but observe a little what passes in them-

selves and others: this point enlarged on. If it be true now, that it is wise to prefer the pleasures of life to the hopes of futurity, it will be true fifty years hence, that a man acted wisely by so doing; for truth is always the same; and yet if he lives till then, it is great odds but that he judges otherwise; as we find men do every day: this point enlarged on. Hence arises the difference, that in one case reason is excluded by sense and the prevailing power of present objects; in the other it is free, and judges from the truth and nature of things. Throw out sense and appetite, and the question will be reduced to these two points: I. whether we can have sufficient evidence for the existence of the things not seen, as may make them capable of being brought into competition with the things that are seen, the existence of which is in this question out of doubt? II. whether the value of *the things which are not seen* be so great, that we ought in prudence to forego the enjoyment of *the things which are present with us?* There are several ways by which we satisfy ourselves of the existence of things without us: the chief of these is sense. This evidence extends to this world and the things of it; and though some have taken great pains to doubt the existence of these, yet it is a question whether any man did ever reach that perfection of scepticism. This evidence may be styled the strongest in one respect, as it most universally affects mankind, who more readily receive the reports of sense than the conclusions of reason. Not but that the evidence of reason is as strong for the existence of things not seen, as sense is for the things which are seen; as is manifest in the proof of a first cause: so likewise from the testimony of others we believe in the existence of things which they have seen, but we have not; this is the evidence of faith, and on it men act in their dearest concerns in this world: this point enlarged on. Hence it is no manner of proof that things do not exist because they are not seen, as they may admit of another proof: yet the wisdom of the voluptuous man is founded

in this prejudice: he thinks it wisdom not to part with a certainty for an uncertainty: this point enlarged on, with respect to the things of this world, which he sees and feels, and to future things, which lie out of the way of his senses. Sense is the measure of his certainty, else why should he judge as he does? His senses only prove his present existence in this world; not that he shall not live hereafter in another; and yet from the former he concludes in prejudice to the other world; which is very absurd, since this evidence affects not, one way or other, the belief of future rewards and glories: this point enlarged on. Hence therefore sense can judge only on one side; it can be no rule in this dispute; for a rule must be a common measure of the things to be estimated, and applicable to both. Let sense prove, as strongly as you will, the existence of this world, and the things of it, how can it affect the belief of another? That you live now proves not that we shall *not* live hereafter; therefore the evidence of sense for this world ought not to prejudice our belief of another. The advantage of this evidence of sense is great, because it is the first that men come to the use and application of; and thus they learn to trust to it in all cases. Men come later to the use of reason, for the evidence of which they have less occasion; and they use still less than they have occasion: being then not equally acquainted with the certainty of this evidence as with the demonstrations of sense, the deductions of reason satisfy them less than the reports of sense. Such is the true state of this question. Now if the evidence for unseen things be not of equal weight with the evidence of sense, the things which are not seen can never be made so clear as to compete with the things that are seen; though the means by which we arrive at the knowlege of the former may afford an evidence equal to the evidence of sense. Many things are known only from reason, and yet are as well received as any report of sense: this point enlarged on, with respect to the productions and works of nature. Another evi-

dence for things not seen is faith, an evidence to which the world in temporal affairs pays great respect, however shy they may be of admitting it as a principle of religion: this point enlarged on, showing that a man believes more about this world and its affairs, on the report made from other people's senses than he does from his own. This then the world must admit as good evidence for things not seen; since on it men believe the certainty of most things in the world. Now this evidence, where it is perfect, falls little short of that of sense; and men in many cases make no difference between them; which shows that this kind of evidence may be so strong as to leave no room for doubts or suspicions. Where then lies the reason of the objection against the things of another world, because they are not seen, and therefore not to be preferred to the things of this world, which are seen? Neither want their proper evidence; and being possessed of it, they are not the worse for not having that evidence which does not belong to them. If then the case is so, it is extreme folly and want of thought to pursue the objects of sense in opposition to things unseen, without a thorough examination of their evidence and certainty. When you are told that for the blessings of another life we have the certainty of reason and faith, you must own the arguments are proper: the nature of the proof you cannot suspect; and if it be sufficiently strong, you must acknowlege it to be demonstrative in this as in all other like cases. The things of another world may be objects of sense to those of the other world, and are therefore capable of having the evidence of eye-witnesses: so that, should one come down from Heaven, and report the state of things there, his evidence must be admitted, the proof of his coming from Heaven being supposed. Besides, this question concerning future rewards and punishments is not the principal one in religion: it presupposes the belief and knowlege of God, else there is no room for it: a question then will arise, whether God can qualify men to be witnesses

to the world of these unseen things? Doubtless he can reveal these things to men if he pleases; and were the world satisfied that he had revealed such things to such and such men, they must admit them as good witnesses in that case: it comes therefore to this point; can men satisfy the world that God has indeed spoken to them? This enlarged on. Since these things, then, are capable of such good evidence, it will be worth while to inquire whether they have it or no; nor will it be the effect of wisdom to reject them unheard, and to follow the impressions of sense at the hazard of final ruin. It would be strange if a man who has eyes and ears doubted the evidence of things continually thrust in at them. But to arrive at the evidence of reason and faith requires the exercise of thought; because these proofs lie more out of the common road, and are not to be had without being sought for. This is a just account of the reason why most men act by the evidence of sense, and follow the things of this world, while so few pursue with any heart or zeal the invisible things of another. Not that the former are in themselves more real; but because men are sure of them, not being able to exclude the impressions of them, but are dubious respecting the things of futurity, not being able to attend to their proofs. How well this becomes men of education, let any one judge: how they will account for their neglect in not even proving and trying the things which make for their salvation, is hard to say. If it had been intended that we should be directed merely by our eyes, God need not have given us the power of reflexion; and he will not excuse us for resigning ourselves to sense, which was given, not to rule, but to serve man. Concluding observations.

PART II.

Second subject of inquiry--whether the value *of things not seen* be so great that we ought in prudence to forego the enjoy-

ment of *the things that are present with us.* There can be no ground to persuade men to renounce the pleasures of life, and expose themselves to troubles, which are often the companions of virtue, in hopes of future glory, unless this glory be great enough to recompense them for the losses and sufferings sustained in its pursuit. If the rewards of Heaven be infinitely preferable to the things of this world, then it is the part of wisdom to choose the greatest, though not the present good, and to prefer the severe duties of religion to the soft allurements of pleasure; since our present afflictions are but momentary, and will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. On this principle the Apostle argues in the text, and justifies his own practice and behavior: he suffered persecution gladly for the sake of Christ and his truth: he suffered on the prospect of future glory; and though not dead to the sense of nature, or void of feeling, yet knowing the value of the rewards for which he labored, he made this choice. The Apostle's argument is founded on the different duration of the things of this world and of the other. It must be allowed that we have the same evidence for the uncertain, and, at best, for the short duration of the things of this life, as for their existence; that is, the evidence of sense: this point enlarged on. Let us then examine what are the conclusions of reason from this head, that *the things which are seen are temporal.* To estimate the happiness of man, we must take into account the nature of his desires and inclinations, and that of the objects which he pursues: if there be such a due proportion between them, that the object is capable of satisfying the desire, then the object obtained is capable of making a man happy: uneasiness, and the want of something which we have not, cannot do so; which must always be the case when our desires are fixed on objects which do not answer to them, and afford not such a pleasure as may fill and content the mind. There are different passions and desires incident to man; not the same in all, but varying

according to temper, habits, age, and the like: these, being so uncertain, enter not into this inquiry, which is after man's natural happiness: this must be estimated by his natural and constant desires; among which the greatest is the desire of life: this point enlarged on, showing that as life is but short, and must end in death, the life of this world cannot be an adequate object of desire, or make a man happy; because it does not answer to his natural desire, but leaves him restless and uneasy. Another natural and constant desire, grafted on the former, and springing from it, is that of happiness uninterrupted by afflictions of any kind: hence the fear of losing what we possess often equals the pleasure of the possession; which shows that no temporary possession can satisfy the mind of man; thus proving that the natural desire is that of perpetual uninterrupted happiness: nothing less than this can make a man happy; and this the world does not afford. To place our happiness therefore on this life, and the things of it, is, at best, to place it where it cannot be had. We can never free ourselves from the natural desires of life and happiness: this point enlarged on in the case of an atheist, who, retaining the desire of eternal happiness, but denying the possibility of it, reduces himself to a state which cannot afford him happiness: so that to have desires which cannot end in enjoyment for want of suitable objects, is to have desires only to make us miserable. If then this world has nothing that can make us happy, it cannot be the effect of wisdom to seek it there: so that the first conclusion of reason is, that the things of this world being temporal, and our desires adapted to the fruition of things eternal, this world can never make us happy: we must therefore seek where we may meet with objects suited to our desires, and thus arrive at perfect happiness: so that the voice of nature speaks the same language as our Saviour, (Matt. vi. 19. 20): these verses explained. That the things which are seen are temporal, is no sufficient proof that there are things which are not seen which are eter-

nal; though it is a great presumption that God, not having fitted this world to our desires, has fitted our desires to another world, and has not given us these cravings of nature merely to vex us without the possibility of their being satisfied. The things of this world however being temporal, is a proof that they cannot make us happy. Hence religion becomes a very serious concern, since it alone can furnish objects adapted to our natural desires. Is it not then very unnatural to see a man rejoice and triumph in the thoughts that there is no eternal life or happiness? It is indeed better not be, than to be miserable; the thoughts therefore of dropping into eternal silence may be the refuge of guilty fear, but never can be a natural joy to the soul of man, which longs for everlasting life. The only reason why any man can wish there may be no other world is, that he may more freely enjoy this; a wise reason, if we consider the value of this world, and how fleeting the things of it are. So little do men gain by gaining this world, or lose by losing it, that its concerns would weigh but light in this question, were not men guided more by the violence of passion than either by reason or the regular desires of nature. For, secondly, suppose that religion were very uncertain, and a man liable to be deceived in his hopes of future rewards; let us again examine by this rule, that *the things which are seen are temporal*, the consequence of this mistake, and how much a man would suffer by it. In ordinary life the pleasures that are consistent with innocence will be found to afford more real satisfaction than the vicious man can ever receive from the gratification of his sensual desires. But we will waive this topic, as the text supposes us to give up this world, and submit to many hardships in order to obtain the other; and it is always difficult to submit to the restraints of religion, till men have mastered their appetites, and learned to use this world as not abusing it. Say then, that a man loses the pleasures of this

world in pursuing those of another; his loss must be valued according to the worth of the thing lost. Now the things of this world being very uncertain possessions, their loss cannot be set very high: ill-success and disappointments often render all our labor in pursuing them abortive; and few attain to the end of their desires. This being the case, he that pursues the glories of another world to the neglect of this, may perhaps lose just nothing at all: this point enlarged on. We may learn then, from the nature of worldly possessions and our own experience, what chance a man has of being satisfied with the enjoyments of life, even if he takes the utmost pains for them: possibly he may never get them; for there are many pretenders who are ever jostling one another out: possibly too, if he does get them, they may leave him before he has half done with them, or he may even not relish them; for many things are proved by possession to be but empty and vain allurements. Now this chance for worldly happiness is all that a man quits for religion: this point enlarged on. On the other side, if religion reaches no farther than this life, still it makes men easy under its disappointments; so that whatever the loss of the world may be to a worldly man, yet to a truly religious one it is inconsiderable, as he is comforted and confirmed against such losses by the hopes of more solid enjoyments. Add this therefore to the account, and religion will appear to be the surest step, if not to happiness, yet to ease and contentment: this topic enlarged on, showing that, as things go, it is well if the pain and uneasiness of losing the world be not all we get by pursuing it; whilst religion teaches us that not to enjoy its pleasures is no great mischief: so that, if there be no other world but this, we are sure by religion to get the second best thing that can be had, that is, contentment. Admit that the principal thing is to have and enjoy the things we want; the next best is to be easy without them: the first the world rarely grants; the next

religion never denies. And thus far we may argue from the nature of worldly things, without making any comparison between them and those of another life; for this comparison will even make it reasonable to choose the sorrows of life for the sake of future glory; *since the things which are not seen are eternal.* Of the nature of future happiness we know but little: the descriptions of it in Scripture are figurative, and lead not to the true knowlege of its glories: possibly this world affords no notions proper to express the happiness of Heaven, which therefore can be described only by figures taken from our present sense of pleasure; from hence we only argue that the happiness is very great: but we have a clear notion of duration; here therefore the Scripture speaks plain, and tells us that this happiness is for evermore. *Whosoever*, says our Saviour, *believeth in me shall live, though he die; and whosoever believeth on me shall not die eternally.* This is the natural happiness of man, since this alone can answer his natural desire of eternal life; and nothing can be more evident to sense than this is to reason, that something has been from all eternity, and shall continue to all eternity; so that our desires of eternity are not loose ill-grounded desires, but have objects in nature fitted to them. This being the case, is it not agreeable to the very instinct of our nature to seek those things which can alone make for our happiness, if by any means we may attain to them? To lead us to them is the work of religion: to be employed in it therefore, is to be employed in the work of nature, which is to seek its own happiness and perfection. If religion be attended with difficulties, yet the glories we attain thereby are worth the purchase: this point enlarged on. It is wise to retire from the pleasures of the world, if it were only to guard against this certain evil consequence, that if we follow things present to the neglect of future happiness, the time will come when our present enjoyments will be past, when things future will be growing into things present: then this evil thought

alone will haunt us, that for the time past we have been comforted, but must be for the time to come tormented. Short-lived as men are, they often outlast the world, that is, its enjoyments: this point enlarged on. Concluding reflexions.

DISCOURSE LX.

II CORINTHIANS, CHAP. IV.—VERSE 18.

For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

PART I.

THE motives to obedience in all religions are thus far the same, that they depend on the belief of another invisible world, and the different state and condition of good and bad men in it: for though it has been maintained, with some show of reason, that virtue is its own reward, and that man's chief happiness would consist in the practice of it, though there were no other rewards annexed to it, yet this, supposing it to be true, is by much too narrow a foundation to build religion on; for this could influence only men of abstracted thought and reason, who are in comparison a very inconsiderable part of mankind. The generality of the world live by sense, and take their measures of happiness not from the remote conclusions of reason, but from their present feeling, from the impressions which are made on them by the things which they deal and converse with every day; and the rewards and punishments of religion are calculated to this sense and feeling, excepting only that they are distant, and not capable of being made the present objects of sense: for the punishments denounced in the gospel against the unrighteousness of men, are such as nature recoils at; such as, according to the sense the world has of misery and pain, are insupportable evils; and the only reason why they operate so weakly on the minds and affections of men is this, 'that they are not seen.' The same may be said of the rewards of the gospel: they contain the very happiness that nature thirsts after,

which is life and pleasure for evermore: but neither can our eyes see these rewards; and therefore they fall short of raising men to that degree of virtue and holiness which in reason they ought to do.

The advantage which the things of this world have in this respect is not to be dissembled: they play and sport before the senses: the man of thought and reflexion cannot but see them; and the man of no thought sees nothing else. This advantage the Apostle seems to acknowlege, by styling the things of this world 'the things which are seen,' and the rewards of the gospel 'the things which are not seen.' In this lies all the force and strength of worldly temptations and pleasures; for were the enjoyments of this world and the next equally remote, there could be no competition between them. This most men would find to be true, would they but observe a little what passes in themselves and others. There are few but would be well content that that part of their life which is past and gone had been spent in virtue and sobriety: they find no comfort in recollecting the lewd frolics and extravagant vices of their youth; yet still they cannot resist the present temptations of pleasure, but go on adding to the account of their folly and sin. And is not this a decision of the question? Does not reason determine against the world and the enjoyments of it? And is it not mere sense that turns the scale of the world's side? If it be true now, that you do wisely in preferring the pleasures of life to the hopes and expectations of futurity, it will then be true fifty years hence, that you did wisely in choosing this world, and renouncing the pretences to heaven; for truth is always the same: and yet, if you live to see that time, it is great odds but that you judge otherwise, and condemn yourself of folly and indiscretion for all your past vices and sinful pleasures. This is a judgment which we see men make every day: they pursue the things that are present; but no sooner are they gone, but they condemn themselves, wishing they could recal the time, that they might apply it to better purposes. And whence arises this difference but from hence; that in one case reason is excluded by sense and the prevailing power of present objects, but in the other case is free and unrestrained, and judges from the truth and nature of things?

Throw out sense and appetite, and let the cause be heard at the bar of reason; and the question then, between 'the things which are seen,' and 'the things which are not seen,' will be reduced to these two points:

First, whether we can have such sufficient evidence for the existence of the things not seen, as may make them capable of being brought into competition with the things which are seen, the existence of which, in this question, is out of doubt?

Secondly, whether the value of 'the things that are not seen' be so great, that we ought in prudence to forego the enjoyment of 'the things which are present with us?'

There are several ways by which we satisfy ourselves of the existence of things without us: the chief of these is sense. This evidence extends to this world and the things of it: and though some have taken great pains to doubt of the existence of things which they saw and felt, yet it may well be questioned whether ever any man did indeed arrive to that perfection of scepticism? This evidence may be styled the strongest in one respect, as it most universally affects mankind, who much more readily receive the reports of sense than the conclusions of reason. Not but that the evidence of reason in some cases is altogether as strong and conclusive for the existence of things not seen, as sense is for the things which are seen. This is manifest in the proof of a first Cause; where, from the visible works of the creation, the being of an eternal Cause is proved to a demonstration, from such principles as sense and reason cannot resist. So likewise, from the testimony and credit of others, we arrive to a certainty of the existence of some things which they have seen, but we have not; which evidence is properly the evidence of faith, and may be so circumstantiated as to admit no doubt or scruple. On this evidence men act in their dearest concerns in this world; and are as well satisfied of the existence of some persons and places which they never saw, as they are of the persons and places they every day converse with. And from hence it follows that it is no manner of proof or presumption that things do not exist, because they are not seen; for there are several ways of being satisfied of the existence of things; and seeing them is but one way: and things which admit not of this proof may admit of another:

and therefore it is great weakness to suspect the reality and existence of things merely because we do not see them.

And yet the greatest piece of wisdom that the voluptuous man has to boast of is founded in this prejudice: he thinks it wisdom to be on the surest side, and not to part with a certainty for an uncertainty. The things of this world he sees and feels; and in renouncing them he is sure he renounces what might afford him certain pleasure and enjoyment: but he has not this notice nor evidence of future things: they lie out of the way of his senses; and therefore he looks on them to have much less of certainty in them than the present objects of life; and concludes very solidly, that it is best to make sure of something, and not to forego his present possession for the distant hope of enjoying the uncertain blessings of futurity. Now sense is the measure of his certainty; or else how comes he to take it for granted that there is more certainty of the things which are seen than of the things which are not seen? His senses only prove to him that he lives at present in this world: they cannot possibly prove to him that he shall not live hereafter in another. So that the evidence of sense reaches but to one side of the question, to assure him of his present being; and yet from this evidence he concludes in prejudice to the other world; which is very absurd, since the evidence of sense cannot, one way or other, affect the belief of future rewards and glories. Now in all comparisons men ought to weigh the reasons on both sides: but the comparing and preferring visible things before invisible, for the sake of the evidence of sense, is comparing and preferring one to another on seeing only the reason of one side; for sense only extends to visible things, and has nothing to do with invisible: and therefore the judgment that men are apt hastily to make in this case, when brought to the test of reason, must appear to be groundless and precarious.

Since then, in the question between things visible and invisible, it is evident that sense can judge but of one side; it follows that sense can be no rule of judging in this dispute: for a rule must be the common measure of the things to be estimated, and applicable to both; but sense is applicable to sensible objects only, and therefore can be no rule in any question

between the things that are, and the things that are not, the objects of sense.

Allow sense to prove, as strongly as you would have it, the existence of this world and the things of it: but how can that affect the belief of another world? The existence of this world will not prove that there is no other world. That you live now is no argument that you shall not live hereafter. And therefore the evidence of sense for this world ought to be no prejudice against the belief of another.

The advantage of this evidence of sense is great, because it is the first that men come to the use and application of; and by the constant and familiar use of it, they learn to depend on it, and trust to it in all cases. It is much later that men come to the use of reason: and this evidence of reason they have less occasion for, and still use it less than they have occasion: so that they are not equally acquainted with the certainty of this evidence, as they are with the demonstrations of sense; and therefore are seldom so perfectly satisfied with the deductions of reason as with the reports of sense. This is the true state of the question between the evidence of sense and the evidence of reason, and the preference the world gives to the deductions of one and the other.

Now, if there can be no evidence for unseen things, which may be of equal weight with the evidence of sense; then indeed the things which are not seen can never be made so evident as to stand in competition with the things which are seen. But the means by which we arrive to the knowlege of things which we do not see, are reason and faith; and these may afford an evidence equal to the evidence of sense.

There are many things which can be known only from reason, which yet are as well received as any report of sense. We see many productions and works of nature every day, the cause of which is secret and remote, and not discoverable by the senses; and yet no man doubts but that all these effects have causes. You can no more suppose, against the evidence of your reason, that these things came into being without any cause, than you can suppose, against the evidence of your senses, that these things which you see have no being. Here then the evidence for the thing not seen is equal to the evi-

dence for the thing seen. So then a thing's not being seen can be no prejudice or presumption against its existence; since some things which are not seen are capable of being demonstrated.

Hence it follows, that though the things of this world be always before our eyes, and we have no reason to doubt of their existence; and the things of the other world are at a distance, and hid from us; yet this is no reason to prefer the things of this world before the things of another; since there is an evidence which extends to things not seen, which is equal to the evidence of sense; and, for aught we know, this evidence may belong to these unseen things of another world; and if it does, then the things of another world, in point of certainty, stand on an equal bottom with the things which are seen.

This makes it very unreasonable to take up with the enjoyments of this world as the surer and more certain enjoyments, and to suffer ourselves to be imposed on by our senses, and prejudiced in favor of present objects: because, till we have proved and examined the evidences for the things not seen, we cannot conclude that the things seen are more certain than they; since they are capable of being made as evident by other arguments, as sensible objects are by the sense.

Another evidence for things not seen is faith; an evidence that the world in temporal affairs pays great respect to, however shy they are of admitting it for a principle of religion: for there is no man but who believes a great deal more concerning this world, and the affairs of it, on the report made from other people's senses, than he does from his own. It is a narrow sphere that a man acts in, and his senses go but a very little farther than he himself goes: and a man's knowlege would be extremely confined, were he to know and believe nothing but what he saw and heard himself. Now there are things in this world which all people believe to be in the world, and yet not one in ten thousand ever saw them. What evidence do they believe on then? not on the evidence of sense; for these things never fell under their senses; but they believe on the report and credit of others, that is, on the evidence of faith.

Here then is another evidence, which the world cannot refuse to admit as good evidence for things not seen; since men

believe on this evidence the certainty of all those things in the world which themselves have not seen, that is, of most things in the world.

Now this evidence, where it is perfect, that is, where there is a sufficient number of credible witnesses to the thing in question, falls very little short of the evidence of sense. You can observe, I believe, no difference that men make between many things which they take on the credit of others, and the things which they receive from the information of their own senses; which shows that this kind of evidence may be so strong as to leave no room for doubts or suspicions.

Now then urge your objections against the things of another world, that they are not seen, and therefore not to be preferred to the things of this world, which are seen; where lies the reason and sense of this argument? If the things of this world are seen, they have their proper evidence: if the things of the next world are not seen, they do not therefore want their proper evidence. If there be a sufficient evidence that is proper to them, and they have that evidence, they are not the worse for not being seen, that is, for not having that evidence which does not belong to them.

If then the things of another world, though they are such as eye hath not seen, are yet nevertheless capable of as good proof and evidence as the things which are seen, it is extreme folly, and want of thought and consideration, to pursue the objects of sense in opposition to things unseen, without well examining into the evidence and certainty of these unseen things. When we tell you that for the glories and blessings of another life we have the certainty of reason and faith, you must needs own that we urge proper arguments: the nature of our proof you cannot suspect. If we have enough of reason, and enough of the evidence of faith, you must acknowlege our proof to be demonstrative, because it is a proof which in all other cases you admit for things not seen, reason and faith.

The things of another world may be objects of sense to those of the other world, and therefore are capable of having the evidence of eye-witnesses: nor should I easily be convinced of absurdity, should I assert that there may possibly be a commu-

nication between the two worlds. Suppose then one should come down from heaven, and report the state of things there; this would be an eye-witness, and the evidence exactly the same with that which you admit in other cases. He must give good proof indeed of his coming from heaven; and that in this case is supposed.

Consider farther, that this question concerning the future rewards and punishments of another life is not the first or principal question in religion; it supposes the belief and knowlege of God: for unless we believe the being of a God, who is the just judge of the world, there is no room for this question of rewards and punishments. In this argument then the being of a God is presupposed; and a question then will arise, whether God can qualify men to be witnesses to the world of these unseen things? It is not to be denied but that God can, if he pleases, reveal these things to men: and were the world satisfied that God had indeed revealed such things to such and such men, they could not scruple admitting them as good witnesses in that case. It comes then to this point, whether it be possible that men can give satisfaction to the world, that God has indeed spoken to them? And if there be any one thing that you will agree God can do, and man cannot do, this will be no dispute: for should God do that thing by the man he appoints to be his witness, the hand of God working with him would be a full proof that he spoke by the voice of God, and declared not his own, but the things of God. And this would be a sufficient ground for our faith.

Since then these things are capable of such good evidence, it will be worth your while to inquire whether they have it or no: and I suppose it will not be thought the effect of reason or wisdom to reject them unheard, and to follow the impressions of sense and appetite at the hazard of being finally ruined and destroyed.

Every man who has eyes and ears is attached by the evidence of sense; and therefore it would be strange if any man doubted of the things, the evidence of which is so continually thrust in at his eyes and ears. But to arrive at the evidence of reason and faith, requires that we should exercise the faculties of our understanding; requires our diligence and attention; because

these proofs lie more remote, out of the common road, and are not to be had without seeking for.

This is a just account of the reason why most men act by the evidence of sense, and follow and admire the things of this world; and so few pursue, with any heart or zeal, the invisible things of another: not that the things of this world are in themselves more real or certain than the things of another world; but because men are sure and certain of the things of this world, not being able to exclude the impressions of them; and are dubious of the things of futurity, not being able to attend to the proofs of them.

But how well this becomes men of thought and education let any one judge; or what account they will be able to give of their neglect, in not so much as proving and trying the things which make for their salvation, is hard to say. Why should your eyes run away with your reason and understanding? If you had been to be directed merely by your eyes, God need not have given you the power of reflexion; and since he has given you this ability, he will not excuse your resigning tamely to sense; which was given not to govern, but to serve man. If the things of another world are capable of being proved, it concerns you to know whether they are proved or no; especially considering the vast disproportion there is between the things of this life and the next. The argument for present enjoyment is so far good, that in things of equal value a wise man would secure his share as soon as he could, and take the first opportunity of enjoying the happiness which would not improve by being stayed for. But here the case is very different: the things of this world are 'seen' indeed; but that is all: no sooner are they seen but they are gone, and leave the man more restless after the fruition than he was before: but the things of futurity are of endless duration, and once enjoyed will never desert the possessor. And therefore it is worth a wise man's labor to restrain himself from the present allurement of life, to suspend his happiness for a time, which will so greatly increase by the delay, and pay such interest for the present self-denial which he exercises: 'For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.'

DISCOURSE LX.

PART II.

THE second thing to be inquired into is, whether the value of 'the things which are not seen' be so great, that we ought in prudence to forego the enjoyment of 'the things which are present with us.'

There can be no ground or foundation to persuade men to renounce the pleasures of this life, and to expose themselves to the troubles and inconveniences which often are the companions of virtue and holiness, in hopes of future glory and happiness, unless this future glory and happiness are so great and valuable as to recompense all the losses and sufferings which men must sustain in the pursuit of them. But if this be the case, if the rewards of Heaven are infinitely to be preferred to the things of this world, it will then be but agreeable to the common maxims of wisdom and prudence to choose the greatest though not the present good, and to prefer the severe duties of virtue and religion to the soft allurements of vice and pleasure; since our light afflictions in this life can be but for a moment, and will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And it is on this principle that the Apostle argues in the text; 'For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal:' by this he justifies his own practice and behavior: he suffered persecution gladly for the sake of Christ and his truth: he stripped himself of all the comforts of this life, and yielded himself up to all the hardships and evils that man can suffer: but it was on the prospect of future glory. He was not so dead to the sense of nature, as to think the good things of this world worth nothing; or so void of feeling, as to delight in ill usage: but he knew the value of the rewards for which he labored; that they were so great, as to justify the choice he made, of suffering for Christ's sake, rather than of enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season.

The Apostle's argument is founded on the different duration

of the things of this world and the other. Now it must be agreed that we have the same evidence of the uncertain, and, at best, the short duration of the things of this life, as we have for the existence of them; that is, the evidence of sense. If the voluptuous man has this advantage, that in following after the things of this life he follows things which he sees, and by the evidence of every sense knows to be real, it must be acknowleged that religion at least has this advantage, that by the same evidence of sense it proves these things to be scarce worth following after or enjoying, since they so soon vanish away, and withdraw from being either the objects of sense or of pleasure: so that, as to this part of the argument, the allowances must be equal on both sides. The men of this world have the certain evidence of sense for the reality of the things of this world, and that they do exist; but they must grant, on their part, that we have the same certain evidence of sense that these things will not long exist; but that both they and their enjoyments must shortly perish together.

Since this then is a clear case on both sides, and the principles are undisputed, let us take this part of the argument alone, and examine what are the conclusions of reason from this head, that 'the things which are seen are temporal.'

To estimate the happiness of man, we must take into the account the nature of his desires and inclinations, and the nature of those objects which he pursues. If there be such a due proportion between these two, that the object is capable of satisfying the desire, then the object obtained is capable of making a man happy. To be restless and uneasy, and still wanting something that we have not, will not, I suppose, be thought a good description of a happy life; and yet this must always be the case when our desires are fixed on such objects as do not answer and correspond to them, but fall short of affording such a pleasure as may fill and content the mind. Now there are different passions and desires incident to man: these are not the same in all men, but vary according to the various tempers and habits of men, and depend on the circumstances of youth and age, and the like: but these passions being so uncertain and mutable, cannot enter into this inquiry, which is after the natural happiness of man, which must be estimated by his

natural and constant desires, and not by the sudden efforts of passion which he is liable to. Now the most natural and constant desire of man is the desire of life: there is nothing nature equally abhors with the thoughts of not being: but then the life of this world is but short, and must end in death; and therefore the life of this world cannot be the adequate object of this desire; and consequently the life of this world can never make a man happy, because it does not answer to the natural desire, but leaves a man restless and uneasy, and in perpetual dread of his approaching dissolution.

Another natural and constant desire which is grafted on the former and springs from it, is the desire of being happy, of being always happy, without suffering any interruption from sorrow or pain, or afflictions of any kind: hence it comes that the fear of losing the thing we possess and enjoy, is often a trouble equal to the pleasure of the possession: which shows that no possession that is not durable can fill and satisfy the mind of man; which evidently proves that the natural desire is the desire of perpetual uninterrupted happiness; and if so, then nothing less than perpetual happiness can be the natural object of that desire, or make a man easy and happy. Now whether the world affords such a happiness as this, can be no question, since we have the evidence of sense and reason and experience to the contrary.

From hence it appears that to place our happiness in this life and the things of it, is at best to place our happiness where it can never be had. We can never possibly free ourselves from the natural desires of life and happiness. The atheist, who would ridicule the belief of another world, and a durable life after this, can never bring himself to say that it is better to die than to live for ever, and for ever happily: so that at once retaining the desires of eternal life, and denying the possibility of such a life, he reduces himself to such a state as can afford no happiness; for to have desires which can never end in enjoyment for want of suitable objects, is to have desires only to make us miserable.

If then this world has nothing that can make us happy, nothing that can answer our natural desires and appetites, surely it cannot be the effect of wisdom or prudence to confine our

inquiries after happiness to this world, where it is not to be had; so that the first conclusion of reason from this allowed principle, that 'the things which are seen are temporal,' is this, that the things of this world being temporal, and our desires adapted to the fruition of things eternal, this world can never make us happy; the consequence of which is, that we must seek out for another abiding place, if haply we may find it, where we may meet with objects suited to our desires; the only means by which we can ever arrive at complete and perfect happiness. So that the voice of nature speaks the same language with our blessed Saviour, and calls out to us in his words, 'Set not your affections on things below, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but set your affections on things above, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal:' that is, place not your desires on this world, which has nothing that can satisfy them; but place your desires above, where God has prepared a happiness answerable to the impressions he has given to the souls of men.

That the things which are seen are temporal, is indeed no sufficient proof that there are things which are not seen which are eternal; though it is a great presumption that, since God has not fitted this world to our desires, he has fitted our desires to another world; and has not given us these cravings of nature merely to vex and torment us, without any possibility of their being satisfied; but thus far we prove, from the things of this world being temporal, that they cannot make us happy. And this makes religion to be a very serious concern, since all our hopes of happiness depend on it: for if religion cannot furnish objects adapted to our natural desires, nothing else can; and therefore men should think soberly and maturely before they reject religion, and divest themselves of all the hopes they have or can have of being happy. Who would not be glad to live for ever, and to be for ever happy? Is it not then very unnatural to see a man rejoice and triumph in the thoughts that there is neither a life nor happiness which is eternal? It is indeed better not to be, than to be miserable; and therefore the thoughts of dropping into everlasting silence and darkness may be the refuge of guilty fear, but never can be a natural joy or comfort to the

soul of man, which longs for nothing so much as life for evermore. The only reason any man can possibly have to wish that there may be no other world is, that he may with the more freedom enjoy this; and this must needs appear to be a wise reason, if we consider the value of this world and the worth of these things, which are no sooner seen but they are gone, and their place is no more found. I should not wonder, were this world to last for ever, to see men of low and abject spirits setting up their rest, and giving up the hopes of more exalted glory and happiness; but now that the world must last but a little time, and we much less, to see men sacrifice their hopes of glory and immortality to the mean and poor enjoyments of this world, is such an absurdity as would puzzle any one to account for, who knew nothing more of man than that he is a reasonable creature. It is so little men gain by gaining this world, and so little they lose by losing it, that the concerns of this world would weigh but light in this question, were not men guided more by the violence of passion than either by reason or the regular desires of nature.

For suppose, secondly, that religion were very uncertain, and a man were liable to be deceived in his expectations of future rewards; let us examine again by this rule, that 'the things which are seen are temporal,' what the consequence of this mistake would be, and how much a man would be a sufferer by it. As to the ordinary course of the world, in which a man may profess his religion without disturbance or persecution, the pleasures which are consistent with innocence and virtue will be found to have more of real satisfaction than the vicious man can ever find from the gratification of his sensual desires and appetites. But we will waive this topic, because the text goes on the supposition that we must give up this world, and submit to many hardships and inconveniences in it, in order to obtain the other; and at all times there is difficulty enough in submitting to the restraints of religion, till men have got to be masters of their own passions and appetites, and have learned to use this world as not abusing it.

Say then, that a man loses the pleasures of this world, in following after the pleasures of another: his loss must be valued according to the worth of the thing which is lost. Now things

of this world being very uncertain possessions, which are often hardly obtained, and seldom long preserved, the loss of these things cannot be set very high. It is evident that the men of the world do not always succeed in their designs: they are liable to a thousand disappointments, which cut them short in their prospects, and render all their pains and labor abortive. Of the many who seek the honors and glory of this life, but a very small number attain to the end of their desires. Since then to follow the world and the good things of it is no sure way of obtaining the world, it may happen that he that pursues the glories of another world to the neglect of this, may lose just nothing at all; for, possibly, had he given himself up to this world, he might have got no share in it: for such is the mutable condition of these things, and so many the chances they are liable to, that a man can have no security from all his pains and toil of enjoying the thing he pursues: and if by following the world he might possibly have got nothing, then possibly by not following the world he may lose nothing: for a man cannot be said to lose more than he might have got. And therefore in this question it is a great mistake to reckon up all the good things of this world together, and then to say, these things do we lose by religion; for if we had no religion, we should never be able to get the hundredth part of these fine things; and we cannot be said to relinquish more of the world than we might have got had we not relinquished it.

And now you may learn, from the nature of worldly possessions and your own experience, what sort of chance a man has of being satisfied with the enjoyments of life, supposing him to take the utmost pains for them: possibly he may never get them; for there are so many pretenders, that they are ever jostling one another out; and possibly too, if he does get them, they may leave him before he has half done with them; or, it may be, when he has got them, he may not like or relish them; for many things which look well at a distance, and raise and inflame the desires, lose their value by being possessed, and appear to be, what in truth they are, empty and vain allurements. Now this chance for worldly happiness is all that a man quits for religion; for you cannot say that he quitted the good things of life, without knowing whether he ever could

have had them or no. It is ten to one against you, that if you follow the world you get nothing, or but little by it; and therefore there are the same odds on the other side, that if you follow religion you lose little or nothing by it. So that supposing religion to be uncertain, yet a man does not venture much for it, or put himself into a much worse condition than he was in before, by reason of the uncertain condition of the world.

And on the other side, this may be said, that if religion reaches no farther than this life, yet one good effect of it here is evidently this, that it makes men easy and contented under the disappointments of this life: so that whatever the loss of the world may be to a worldly man, yet to a truly religious man it is inconsiderable, because he is not equally affected with such losses, being strengthened and confirmed against them by the hopes he has entertained of more lasting and solid enjoyments. So that add this to the account, and it will appear that religion in this world is the surest step you can take, if not towards happiness, yet towards ease and contentment: for since so many who follow the world must necessarily be disappointed by following the world, we expose ourselves to all the uneasiness and pain of losing it; and as things go, it is well if the pain and uneasiness of losing the world be not all we get by pursuing it. But religion is the art of governing and ruling the passions, of making ourselves easy without being gratified with the pleasures of this life; and when we are thus prepared, not to enjoy the pleasures is no great mischief. So that if there be no other world but this, yet by religion we are sure of getting the second best thing that can be had in the world, that is, contentment. Admit that the first thing is to have and enjoy the things we want; yet certainly the next best thing is to be easy without them. The first the world but rarely grants; the next religion never denies. And thus far we may argue from the nature of worldly things, without entering into the comparison between them and the things of another life; which extremely alters the state of the question, and makes it reasonable not only to forego the pleasures, but even to choose and embrace the sorrows of life for the sake of future glory: 'For the things which are not seen are eternal,'

As to the nature of the happiness of another life, we know

but little of it: the descriptions we meet with in Scripture are figurative, and lead not to the true knowlege of the glories they describe. Possibly this world affords no notions or ideas proper to express the happiness of Heaven; which can therefore only be described in figures taken from the present sense we have of pleasure and enjoyment: hence the happiness of Heaven is sometimes painted under the figure of a marriage feast, which is a time usually stolen from sorrow, and dedicated to mirth and good humour. Sometimes the description is grounded on our notions of power and dignity, which are great darlings to mankind: hence we read of crowns of glory, which cannot be shaken, which fade not away, which are reserved for us in the highest heavens. From hence we only argue that the happiness is very great, and exceeding much the glories of this world, which are but faint images, and scarcely serve to represent the glories of Heaven: but we have a clear notion of duration; and therefore to this point the Scripture speaks plain, and tells us that these are pleasures for evermore; that they are eternal, and eternally the same without changing. Nothing likewise is more usual than to express the happiness of Heaven by life, by everlasting life: 'Whosoever,' says our Saviour, 'believeth in me shall live, though he die; and whosoever believeth on me shall not die eternally.' This then is the natural happiness of man, since it alone can answer the natural desires of man; for nothing less than eternal life can satisfy that desire of life which is implanted in man; and nothing can be more evident to sense than this is to reason, that something has been from all eternity, and something shall be to all eternity: so that our desires of eternity are not loose ill-grounded desires; but there are evidently objects in nature fitted to them. Since then we cannot possibly live without desiring to live for ever, and to enjoy eternal happiness; since likewise it is clear to a demonstration that there are things eternal; is it not agreeable to the very instinct of nature to endeavor after these things, which can only make for our happiness, if by any means we may attain to them? To lead us to the possession and enjoyment of these things is the work and business of religion; and therefore to be employed in the work of religion is to be em-

ployed in the work of nature, which is to seek and pursue its own happiness and perfection.

If religion is attended with difficulties, yet the glories we attain to through the means of religion are worth the purchase. What is there that can be had without pains and trouble? Not even the present enjoyment of this life. Why then should we think much of being at some trouble to purchase the eternal things of heaven? We do not grudge it in less matters, in the matter of our earthly hopes and desires. We lose nothing by religion that we could possibly keep long without it: a good man can suffer only in this world; and were he not to suffer, yet the course of nature would soon part him and the world, and the enjoyments of it. And is it not worth our while to resign the things we cannot keep a little the sooner for the sake of that happiness, which once possessed can never be taken from us, but like our desires will be ever fresh and new, not impaired by use or palled by enjoyment?

It is wise to retire from the pleasures of the world, were it only to guard against this certain evil consequence, that if we follow the present things to the neglect and contempt of future happiness, the time will certainly come when our present enjoyments will be past and gone, when things future will be growing apace to be the things present; and then we shall have nothing left but this evil thought to haunt us perpetually, that we have had our good things in this world, and must expect evil things in the world to come; that we have for the time past been comforted, but must for the time to come be tormented. As short-lived as men are, they often outlast the world, that is, the enjoyments of it: they live to be past the pleasures of it, and can have no comfort or ease by any sense. And is not a wicked man in a fine condition, when he has no enjoyment in this world and no hopes in the next? Men, in the youth and vigor of age, may overcome the troublesome thoughts of another world: they are capable of a constant succession of worldly pleasures, which may extinguish thought and consideration: but if they live to be deserted by sense, to be exposed to thought and reflexion, how dismal a prospect have they! how

are they tormented with the thoughts of what is past! and how do they dread the thoughts of what is to come!

And happy were it for them if their fears were to be their only torment: but let their eyes but once be closed, and their fears must be succeeded by more than even their fears could suggest: the things future will then be the things present; and this thought, that they are eternal, will exclude all glimmerings of hope or comfort, and leave them the prey of pain and of despair.

Let us then work whilst we have the day; for the night cometh when no man can work. This is the day, and for aught we know, this only is the day of peace. Consider then the things which make for your salvation, and follow after them, for they lead to life and immortality.

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE LXI.

GENERAL EPISTLE OF ST. JUDE, VERSE 3.

It is at all times the duty of pastors in the Christian church to be zealous in maintaining and propagating the faith of the gospel; but there are some seasons which more especially require of them vigilance to prevent, and of the people care to avoid, the danger of growing errors and superstitions. Such was the occasion of this Epistle, as we learn in verse 4.: hence the Apostle's exhortation in the text. If this was needful in the Apostle's time, when the mischief began first to show itself, what must it be in ours, when the evil seems full-grown, and to surround us in different shapes? when superstition on the one hand, and irreligion on the other, have left true Christians but a narrow path to walk in, and the transition from one of these extremes to the other is so much easier than from either to the truth that lies between them?

Another difficulty also distinguishes our times: St. Jude complains that teachers of perverse doctrines had crept in by stealth, though the churches themselves taught the true faith of the gospel. But in these latter days all churches are tainted with the infection by corrupt members; the errors which we have to contend with are taught by authority as the necessary conditions of Christian communion: this point enlarged on. It is now then more needful than ever to exhort men to *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.* This however is to little purpose, unless you give them some sure mark of the right faith. If you ask of particular churches or

societies of Christians which is the true faith, each answers that its own is right, and that of others wrong: hence no church must be believed on its own word alone, without giving a reason of its faith: yet this pretence of authority is all that can or does justify the dominion of the church of Rome. With how much better grace might St. Jude have told them of his own time, on his own authority, what the true faith was; but so far from doing it, he told them to inquire what it was as formerly delivered to Christians. Church authority is one of those unhappy subjects which is seldom seen but from one of its extremes. With some persons it can do every thing; with others, nothing: these considerations are too copious for the compass of a sermon; some observations are made on the text, which may be of use if duly considered. Firstly: since an Apostle of Christ, in the early days of the church, sent Christians to inquire after the faith delivered from the beginning, the Apostles themselves could be but teachers and witnesses of it, and had no authority or commission to make new articles; otherwise St. Jude's conduct would have been absurd. This truth may be proved from our Saviour's own words, (Mark xvi. 15.) That the gospel was to be taught, not altered, is more expressly declared by St. Matthew, (xxviii. 20.): the promise annexed, (ver. 20.) *and lo! I am with you to the end of the world,* relates to their commission; and on it they could depend only whilst they taught what Christ had commanded. Previously to our Saviour's leaving the world, he told his Apostles that he would send them *a Comforter,* (John xiv. 16.); and he describes his office, (ver. 26.) These verses enlarged on, showing that the office of the Spirit, and the Spirit itself, was given only to make them teachers of Christ's doctrine.

The conduct of the Apostles is next considered, and how they executed the commission intrusted to them. They first elected an Apostle in the place of Judas, and without doubt considered well the qualifications necessary to the office: these

are declared by St. Peter, (Acts i. 21. 22.) to belong to witnesses of the doctrines and works of Christ; their business therefore evidently was to report the doctrines of Christ, not to deliver doctrines of their own. St. Luke particularly tells us that he wrote his gospel, *having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first,* (i. 3.): thus following the rule prescribed by St. Jude, and reporting the *faith once delivered to the saints.* St. John also refers to the beginning and first revelation of the gospel, to show the authority of the doctrines which he delivered, (1 Epist. i. 1-3.): these verses explained, showing also that a right of fellowship with the Apostles, or a right to church communion, depends on embracing the *faith once delivered to the saints,* and on no other doctrines of later date whatever. St. Paul's case was a singular one; he had not the qualification required in the Acts, or in the Epistle of St. Peter; but the way by which this defect was supplied, will justify the observation we are on in the strongest manner imaginable. As St. Paul conversed not with Christ in the flesh, so had he not the gospel from any of the Apostles who did; but he had it by immediate revelation from Christ himself; and therefore, says our Lord, *I have appeared unto thee,* &c. (Acts xxvi. 16.): hence he speaks to the Galatians, of his own authority, as an Apostle, (Gal. i. 1. 11. 12.) And this revelation extended not merely to points of doctrines, but to the knowlege of historical facts also; as is plain from 1 Cor. xi. 23. All these things prove that the Apostles were witnesses and teachers of the faith, and had no authority to add any thing to the doctrine of Christ, or to declare new articles. If then the Apostles who were so highly gifted, had not this power, can their successors without great impiety pretend to it? this point enlarged on in the case of the Romish church. Can then any sober Christian trust himself to such guides, and not tremble when he reads, *though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, let him be accursed?* When the corruptions of the church of Rome were generally

felt and complained of, and no applications caused any alteration, the fear of owning an error being more powerful to continue old errors than the force of truth or even conviction was to reform them; what was left for serious Christians to do, but to separate between the old doctrines of the gospel and the new inventions of men, and to build up a church *on the foundation of the Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone?*

Hitherto we have spoken only of the doctrines of the gospel, and points of Christian faith. If we extend this farther, and say that the Apostles and the church after them had no more authority in any thing else, we shall run into an extreme that can produce nothing but disorder and confusion, and must in the end be subversive of all Christian societies. Let us now then consider the grounds of this distinction, as found in holy Scripture. We have this direction from our Saviour: *if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault*, &c. (Matth. xviii. 15-17.) In cases which fall under this direction, the church has a judicial authority, though it may be and often has been flagrantly abused: to say it has none, is to deny not only the authority of the church, but of Christ also, who gave the direction. This authority is noticed by St. Paul, who rebukes the church of Corinth for not using it to separate from them the incestuous person, who had given offence, not to one, but to all Christians. Another power which the Apostles had and exercised, was the authority of settling churches, and prescribing rules of order and decency to them. St. Paul's conduct in the disputes which happened in the church of Corinth, will show how carefully he distinguishes between his duty to preach the pure gospel of Christ, and his authority in matters of order and decency. The Corinthians had been guilty of great impropriety in eating the Lord's supper, as if they had forgotten the end and use of it; and they are set right by St. Paul, as related 1 Cor. xi. 23. 33. 34.: he also committed the

like authority to his pastoral successors. The Epistles to Timothy and Titus are full of canons for the government of their respective churches. All these particulars laid together show that particular churches had power to settle matters of discipline, order, and decency, for themselves; and that there were no rules of this kind of universal obligation to all churches. As the Apostles, considered singly in the light of commissioned and inspired teachers, had no authority over the faith, neither had they when met together in council. We have but one instance of an Apostolic council, which was held at Jerusalem, of which the proceedings are recorded in Acts xvi. This matter was plainly one of discipline, not of the substance of faith; and it was determined by prudential considerations, arising from the circumstances of the Christian church at that time. This case fully stated and commented on.

There is a question arising out of this case, viz.—why were the particular orders to *abstain from pollution of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled*, &c. singled out, when the Jews were strongly attached to other points of the law? If we consider the case, the reason of this distinction will appear: the great concern being to prevent offence to the Jews, and thus to preserve peace in the church of Christ, it was necessary to guard against practices which lay open to every body's view in daily life: thus a Jew could not have dined at the table of a Christian without having some security that he should not meet with things offered to idols and the like; and thus all intercourse between them would have been cut off, &c.: but the great difficulty in this case lies in the word *fornication;* which seems to be an offence of a moral kind, in which the Jews had no particular concern. In the common sense of the word it could have no meaning here. In respect to things offered to idols, and the like, the Jews were not only forbidden the use of them, but all communication with those who had, even though they were strangers, (Lev.

xvii. 12.) The word *πορνεία*, which we translate fornication, includes all carnal impurity. The abominable lewdness which made part of the heathen worship will account for the worship of idols and whoredom being joined together in the decree of the council. So also they are joined together 1 Cor. vi. 9. and Rev. ii. 14. 20. *Idolatry* is also styled *whoredom* by the writers of the Old Testament; and the great powers which spread idolatry in the world were characterised under the image of a great whore; so that nobody is at a loss to understand the meaning of those writers, when they charge the people with going a whoring after other gods. What has been said in few words, the importance of the subject being considered, may show us the foundation and proper bounds of church authority in holy Scripture, and also the true foundation on which our reformation from the church of Rome stands. If that church asks why we have departed from some which it accounts articles of faith, we answer, because they are no part of *the faith once delivered to the saints:* if we are pressed with the authority of the church which has received them, our answer is, that *Christ Jesus was the author and finisher of the faith;* to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken: if it be asked why we have discarded much ceremony and discipline, we may, without entering into particular cases, answer that the church of England has as much authority to appoint rules for its members as the church of Rome has; that these have been settled on prudential considerations of the circumstances of England, whose church is a far better judge in this respect than that of Rome. But, secondly; if we are to *contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints*, where are we to find this faith, and how can we distinguish it from the addition of later ages? When our Saviour came into the world, the case of the Jewish church was in this respect the same as ours: the evil had been long growing, and the ancient prophets had taken notice of it, as in Isaiah xxix. 13.: but yet

in our Saviour's time traditions were in such esteem, that the Scribes and Pharisees challenged him to answer this question: *why do thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders?* (Mat. xv. 2.)—the very question this which is put to us by the church of Rome, and the darling point insisted on by their emissaries. But hear our Saviour's answer to it: *why do you also transgress the commandments of God by your tradition?*—a question hard to be answered, and which the rulers of the church of Rome should consider well, for they are much concerned in it. If that church pretends to have, by oral tradition, doctrines derived originally from the Apostles, the Jewish doctors referred theirs to Moses, from whom, as they supposed, they received them. The Jews had the writings of Moses and the prophets; the church of Rome has those of the Apostles and Evangelists; yet neither allow their own to be a complete rule, but recur to tradition in order to supply the deficiency. Consider how our Saviour treated this pretence of the Jewish church, and it will direct us how to behave in the like case. He speaks of them as holding doctrines of their own, not of God, (Mark vii. 8. 9.): he shows how their traditions contradicted the law of Moses, and then tells them, *you make the word of God of none effect*, &c.; plainly considering the written law of Moses as the commandment of God, but the traditions of the elders as the law of men. To Moses and the Prophets, who make up the Scripture of the Jews, our Lord constantly appeals: he bids the Jews *search the Scriptures;* tells them *they err, not knowing the Scriptures;* and when he tells them that on the two commandments, of loving God and our neighbor, *hang all the law and the prophets*, he plainly declared that they contained the whole of their religion; for if he had considered the traditions as a rule of religion, he must have reduced them also to his general precepts. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, our Saviour has fully determined this point in the person of Abraham. The application

of this case is easily made to our own: we have seen what our Saviour thought of the traditions, what of the law and prophets of the Jewish church. The Christian church has its Apostles and Evangelists, and also too many traditionary doctrines, not founded in holy writ. What are we to do then? We cannot want better authority than our Saviour's to reject the traditions of men, and to hold fast the doctrine of the Apostles and Prophets of the gospel; that is, *contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.*

DISCOURSE LXI.

GENERAL EPISTLE OF ST. JUDE, VERSE 3.

—It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

It is at all times the duty of the pastors and ministers of the Christian church to call on the people to be zealous to maintain, and by proper methods to propagate, the faith of the gospel; but there are seasons in which it is more especially necessary for them to discharge this duty; seasons which require that the pastors should be vigilant to prevent, and the people careful to avoid, the danger of growing errors and superstition.

Such was the season, and such the occasion of this Epistle. Some very dangerous errors, and some abominable practices, began to show themselves among the members of the church, and there was great reason to apprehend the infection would spread. 'Certain men,' it seems, 'had crept in unawares—ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.' This it was that made it needful for the Apostle to exhort Christians every where to 'contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints.'

If it was needful in the Apostle's times, when the mischief began first to show itself, what must it be in ours, when this evil seems to be at its full growth, and to surround us in different shapes on every side? Superstition on one hand, and irreligion on the other, have left true Christians a narrow path to walk in: and though reason and reflexion will make men

sometimes sick of the extremes, yet the transition from one extreme to another is much easier, than from either to the truth that lies between them. From popery to no religion, and from no religion to popery, is a ready step; and when a man is tired of either extreme, it requires only a resolution to run away from it as fast as he can, to get soon to the other; whereas it requires a serious and a steady mind to stop at the right place.

Another difficulty there is, which distinguishes our times from that of the Apostles: St. Jude complains that some corrupt men, teaching perverse doctrines, had mixed with Christian societies; but it was by stealth and unawares they had crept in: the churches themselves were pure and uncorrupt, and professed and taught the true faith of the gospel of Christ. But our case is far otherwise. There are, indeed, in all churches corrupt members, a calamity common to all times; but in these latter days the infection has spread so far and so wide, that whole churches are tainted with it. The errors we have to contend with are not such as creep in silently and unawares, but such as are taught by authority, and insisted on as necessary conditions of Christian communion: they are pressed on men by an application of all the promises of the gospel to those who receive them gladly, and of all the threats of the gospel to such as embrace them not. Is it not then now, more than ever, needful to exhort men to 'contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints?'

But it is to little purpose to exhort men to be zealous for the Christian faith unless you can give them some sure and certain mark to know what the right faith is. If you inquire of particular churches, or societies of Christians, which is the true faith, each of them will answer, that the faith professed by them is the true one, and that other societies have fallen into errors and mistakes. In this divided state of things, therefore, no church has a right to be believed on its own word merely, without giving a reason of the faith which is in them; and yet this pretence of authority is the only thing that can be said, and therefore it always is said, to justify the dominion which the church of Rome has usurped over the faith of Christians. With how much better grace might St. Jude have dictated to

the Christians of his time, and told them, on his own authority, what the true faith was, in opposition to corrupt teachers! But does he so? By no means: so far from it, that he gives them another rule to examine the faith by, and sends them to inquire what the faith was, which was once or from the beginning delivered to Christians.

Church authority is one of those unhappy subjects which is seldom seen but from one of its extremes: in some places, and with some persons, it can do every thing; in others, it can do nothing. I cannot propose to consider justly so copious a subject in the compass of a sermon; and therefore I shall content myself with laying before you some observations on the apostolic rule in the text, which may be of use if duly considered. And,

First, since an Apostle of Christ, in the early days of the church, sent Christians to inquire after the faith delivered from the beginning, it follows manifestly that the Apostles themselves were but teachers and witnesses of the faith, and had no authority or commission to make new articles of faith. Had it been otherwise, how absurd was it in St. Jude to send Christians to an inquiry after the faith 'once delivered,' when he and they could not but know that there was a standing authority to make articles of faith, and that no such inquiry was wanting.

The truth of this conclusion may be abundantly proved by considering the commission and authority the Apostles received from Christ, and their conduct in the execution of them: 'Go ye,' says our blessed Lord, 'into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature:' Mark xvi. 15. The gospel then was the thing committed to them to be taught to the world, and not to be made or to be altered by them; which sense is delivered in terms more express in St. Matthew, for there the words are, 'Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:' ch. xxviii. 20. The promise annexed, 'And lo, I am with you to the end of the world,' must be relative to their commission, and they could depend on it no longer than whilst they kept within the limits of their commission, which was to teach what Christ had commanded.

When the time of our Saviour's leaving the world drew near,

he told his Apostles he would not 'leave them comfortless, but pray the Father to send them another Comforter, to abide with them for ever:' John xiv, 16. The office of this Comforter is described, ver. 26. 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.' If then the office of the Spirit was to 'bring to their remembrance' what Christ had said to them, their office, as teachers, could only be to publish the doctrine of Christ. The Spirit was likewise to 'teach them all things,' that is, to teach them to understand rightly all things, and to preserve them from mistaking the meaning of what our Lord said to them, which was frequently their case whilst they conversed with him on earth.

Let us consider, in the next place, the conduct of the Apostles, and how they executed the commission with which they were intrusted.

One of the first things they did was to elect an Apostle into the place of Judas. When they were to choose an Apostle, without doubt they considered the qualifications necessary to the office; and for that reason St. Peter declared that the choice was necessarily confined to such as had 'companied with them all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the same day that he was taken up from among us;' so that no man was capable of being an Apostle, who was not capable of being a witness of the doctrines and works of our blessed Lord: a plain evidence that their business was to report the doctrines of Christ, and not to deliver doctrines of their own. Accordingly the four gospels, published to instruct the world in the Christian faith, are an history of what our Saviour did, taught, and suffered: and St. Luke particularly tells us that he wrote his gospel, 'having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first.' So that St. Luke, in writing his gospel, followed the rule prescribed by St. Jude, and reported the 'faith once delivered to the saints.'

St. John, in his first Epistle general, refers likewise to the beginning and first revelation of the gospel to show the authority of the doctrines which he delivered. Hear his own words:

'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked on, and our hands have handled of the word of life—that which we have seen and heard, declared we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.' St. John's referring in this manner to what he had heard and seen, to establish his authority as a preacher of the gospel, plainly shows that he thought himself bound to preach only what he had heard and seen, and that he had no authority to preach any other doctrine. It is observable that St. John, in the passage before us, says expressly that he wrote the things he had heard and seen from the beginning, that those to whom his epistle came might 'have fellowship with the Apostles:' a plain proof that a right of fellowship with the Apostles, or, in other words, a right to church communion, depends on receiving and embracing the 'faith once delivered to the saints,' and not on any other doctrines of later date, by what authority soever published or declared.

St. Paul's case was a singular one: he was not called in our Saviour's life-time, and consequently had not the qualification required in the first of the Acts, when a new Apostle was to be chosen: he was not one of those who had 'companied with the Apostles during the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them:' but if we consider how this defect was supplied in his case, it will justify the observation we are on in the strongest manner imaginable.

As St. Paul conversed not with Christ in the flesh, so neither did he receive the gospel from any of the Apostles, who did; but had it by immediate revelation from Christ himself: so that his preaching had this apostolical character, that he taught the things which he had seen and heard of Christ. When he was miraculously called to be an Apostle, to qualify him for the office Christ promised to be his instructor: 'I have appeared unto thee,' says our Lord, 'for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee:' Acts xxvi. 16. Accordingly St. Paul, speaking to the Galatians of his own authority as an Apostle, tells them that he was 'an Apostle not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead:'

Gal. i. 1. And again, in the 11th and 12th verses, 'I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.'

This revelation to St. Paul extended not merely to points of doctrine, but conveyed to him likewise the knowlege of historical facts: as is plain from 1 Cor. xi. 23. where, speaking of the institution of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, he says, 'I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it;' and so goes on to give an historical account of what was said and done at the last supper; agreeing with the account given by those Apostles who were present at the transaction.

From these things laid together, it is evident that the Apostles were witnesses and teachers of the faith, and had no authority to add any thing to the doctrine of Christ, or to declare new articles of faith.

Now if the Apostles, commissioned directly by Christ himself, and supported by the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, had not this power, can any of their successors in the government of the church, without great impiety, pretend to it? Did the bishops and clergy of the ninth and tenth centuries know the articles of the faith better than the Apostles did? or were they more powerfully assisted by the Holy Spirit? No Christian can think it or say it. Whence is it then that the church of Rome has received the power they pretend to, of making new articles of faith, and dooming all to eternal destruction who receive them not? Can any sober serious Christian trust himself to such guides, and not tremble when he reads the woe denounced by St. Paul; 'Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel—let him be accursed?'

When the corruptions of the church of Rome were generally felt and complained of, and no applications whatever could prevail to obtain any alteration; the fear of owning an error, and thereby weakening the authority claimed, being more powerful to continue the old errors than the force of truth or even of conviction was to reform them; what had serious

Christians left to do, but to seek after, if happily they could find, 'the faith once delivered to the saints;' to separate between the old doctrines of the gospel, and the new inventions of men; and to build up a church 'on the foundation of the Apostles, Christ Jesus himself being the head corner-stone?'

What has hitherto been said relates merely to the doctrines of the gospel; to points of Christian faith: in these neither the Apostles of Christ nor the church after them had any authority, but to preach and publish to the world what they had received. If we extend this farther, and say that the Apostles and church after them had no more authority in any thing else than they had in articles of the faith, we run into an extreme that can produce nothing but disorder and confusion; which must be the destruction of all Christian societies, and end in making every man a church by himself.

It may be worth our while to consider the grounds of this distinction, as they are to be found in holy Scripture.

In the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew, in the fifteenth and following verses, we have this direction from our Saviour: 'If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. But if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen and a publican.'

In cases which fall under this direction (and some there are without doubt, or there would have been no direction about them) the church has a judicial authority, and a right to inflict the punishment mentioned. This power may be, and often has been, most flagrantly abused; but to say the church has no authority in cases which come under this direction, is to deny not only the authority of the church, but the authority of Christ likewise, who gave the direction.

This authority of the church is taken notice of by St. Paul; and he rebukes the church of Corinth for not making use of it, to separate from them the incestuous person, who had given offence not to one, but to all Christians.

But there is another power which the Apostles had and exercised, and which they committed to those who succeeded them; I mean the authority of settling churches, and prescribing rules of order and decency to them.

If we consider St. Paul's conduct in the disputes which happened in the church of Corinth, we shall see how carefully he distinguishes between his duty to preach the gospel of Christ just as he had received it, and his authority in matters of order and decency. The Corinthians had been guilty of great misbehavior in eating the Lord's supper, as if they had forgot the end and the use of it. St. Paul, to set them right, gives them an account of this institution; and here he expressly says, that he delivered to them 'what he had received of the Lord:' but in directing some circumstances of their behavior at this supper, he speaks in his own name: 'When ye come together to eat,' says he, 'tarry one for another; and if any man hunger, let him eat at home:' and concludes, with reserving to himself the giving farther directions at a proper time: 'The rest,' says he, 'will I set in order when I come.'

As he exercised this authority himself, so he committed the like authority to those who succeeded him in the pastoral care. The Epistles to Timothy and Titus are full of rules or canons for the government of the respective churches under their care; which were to be supplied, as occasion required, by orders of their own: 'For this cause,' says St. Paul to Titus, 'I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city.'

Which particulars laid together manifestly show that there was a power or authority in particular churches to settle matters of discipline, order, and decency for themselves; and that there were no rules of this kind of universal obligation to all churches.

As the Apostles, considered singly as commissioned and inspired teachers, had no authority over the faith, neither had they when met together in council: for the doctrine and gospel of Christ could no more be altered by his twelve Apostles than it could be by one of them. We have but one instance of an apostolic council, which was held at Jerusalem; and the

proceedings of it are recorded in the fifteenth of the Acts of the Apostles.

The matter here controverted, and settled by decree of the council, was plainly a matter of government and discipline, and not of the substance of faith; and it was determined by prudential considerations, arising from the circumstances of the Christian church at that time. The case was this: St. Paul had converted many among the Gentiles, and settled several churches in Asia. The Jewish Christians insisted that the Gentile converts should be circumcised, and observe the law of Moses. Paul and Barnabas, Apostles of the Gentiles, withstood this demand of the Jews, and had, as the words of the text are, 'no small dissension and disputation with them.' They agreed to refer the question to the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem; and thither they went. The council being assembled, the case was opened 'with much disputing' on both sides: then St. Peter rose up and declared his opinion, and the reasons of it: he reminds them that he himself was the person chosen by God to be the first preacher of the gospel to the Gentiles, and that God had given a token of his accepting the Gentiles, by giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he had given it to the Jewish Christians, and 'put,' as his own words are, 'no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith;' and then concludes against laying the burden or yoke of the law of Moses on the Gentile converts.

St. Peter's argument is drawn from the case of Cornelius, to whom he was sent by express revelation to preach the gospel. Cornelius was a Gentile, no observer of the law of Moses; nor was St. Peter, when sent to preach to him, instructed to require of him obedience to the law of Moses: and yet in this state God accepted Cornelius and his household, and the gift of the Holy Ghost was poured on them. And St. Peter's conclusion is, that since God accepted Cornelius and his family without calling them to the observance of the Mosaic law, the observance of the Mosaic law was not a condition to be imposed on the Gentile converts.

After St. Peter, Barnabas and Paul gave an account what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles

by them; which was strengthening St. Peter's argument, by showing that what had happened in the case of Cornelius had also happened in many instances during their ministry among the Gentiles.

St. James, Bishop of Jerusalem, speaks next: he approves the reasoning of St. Peter, and shows, from the ancient prophecies, that the call of the Gentiles into the church of Christ was, from the beginning, the design of Providence: 'Wherefore,' says he, 'my opinion is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God.'

It is manifest that this reasoning extends to every part of the ceremonial law, and that the Gentiles were bound no more by one point of that law than by another; and yet we shall find that in the conclusion of the council some points of the law of Moses were required to be observed in the Gentile churches.

It is one thing to be bound to observe the law of Moses as matter of necessary duty; it is another thing to comply with some parts of that law, on motives of Christian charity and prudence. It was lawful for the Gentile converts to live without observing any part of the law of Moses; but though 'all things are lawful, yet,' as St. Paul says, 'all things are not expedient—all things edify not:' and again, 'meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse:' 1 Cor. viii. 8.

This being the reason of the case, the circumstances of the Christian church of that time weighed with this apostolical council to require of the Gentile converts a compliance with some particulars of the Mosaic law. St. James, who opens this advice, gives the reason of it: he considered that in all the cities where Gentile churches had been planted, there were Jewish converts likewise, who were zealous of the law, and would hold no communication with the Gentiles who eat blood, things strangled, and the like; and therefore, unless the Gentile Christians complied in such particulars, there must be an irreconcilable division in the church of Christ, to the loss of that charity on which the gospel sets so great a price.

St. James therefore, after declaring his opinion that the Gentile converts were not bound by the law of Moses, proposes however to write to them to 'abstain from pollution of idols,

and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood:' the reason he gives in these words; 'For Moses of old time hath in every city,' i. e. in the cities where Gentile churches were planted, 'them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.' From whence it is evident that the injunctions of the council to the Gentile converts were founded on prudential considerations with respect to the Jews; and the matters ordained by the council were matters of discipline and government only. The passage understood in this sense contains a very strong argument to justify the decree of the council; for the Jews having been born and bred under the law of Moses, could not easily be persuaded to depart from it; and therefore, unless the Gentile converts could be brought to avoid giving them any offence, there could be no hope of peace in the Christian church.

The reason on which the decree of the council is founded accounts for the conduct of St. Paul in like cases. When he circumcised Timothy, it was because of the Jews which were in those quarters; and when he came to Jerusalem, St. James prevailed with him to purify himself according to the usage of the Jews. The argument made use of by St. James was the very same with that used by the council: 'Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law; do therefore this which we say to thee, that all may know that thou walkest orderly and keepest the law.' This was going a greater length than the council had gone with respect to the Gentiles, 'as touching whom,' St. James says, 'we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from meat offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication.'

There is a question that arises from this case, to know why the particulars mentioned are singled out, when the Jews were strongly attached to other points of the law.

But if you consider the case, the reason for this distinction will evidently appear; for as the concern was to prevent the giving offence to the Jews, and thereby to preserve peace and charity in the church of Christ, it was necessary to guard against the practices which open to every body's view in the common

occurrences of life. A Jew could never be present at the table of a Christian without having some security that he should not meet with things offered to idols, nor with blood, nor things strangled; otherwise all intercourse between them would be cut off: and though St. James, on the principle of the council, persuaded St. Paul to purify himself, yet that had relation to St. Paul's particular circumstances; and the same advice would not have been given to any other Christian who was a Gentile believer; for it was not the intention of the council to recommend the rites and ceremonies of the law to the Gentile Christians.

But the great difficulty in this case is to know what is meant by fornication, which seems to be an offence of a moral kind, and in which the Jews had no particular concern: how therefore it fell under the direction of the council is hard to say.

It is certain that, if we understood fornication in the common sense of the word, and as it is vulgarly used with us, it can have no meaning in this place, it expressing a thing that had no relation to the matter under consideration of the council.

In respect to things offered to idols, and blood, the Jews were not only forbidden the use of them, but were forbidden likewise all communication with those that did use them, though they were strangers, and not bound by the law of Moses: 'I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood:' Lev. xvii. 12. It is no wonder therefore that the Jews, who were zealous for the law, thought all communication forbidden with those who allowed themselves the eating of blood.

They had the same ground for treating in like manner those who partook of meats offered to idols, which I need not spend your time in proving.

The word *πορνεία*, which we translate 'fornication,' has a great latitude, and includes in it all carnal impurity: and whoever considers the abominable lewdness which made part of the worship paid to the heathen idols, will not think it strange to find the worship of idols and whoredom joined together in the decree of the council. Nor is this peculiar to the council; for if you look into the writings of the New

Testament, you will see them joined together in like manner. Thus, in the first of the Corinthians: 'Be not deceived: neither fornicators nor idolaters—shall inherit the kingdom of God:' chap. vi. 9. And in the Revelation of St. John: 'But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication: ch. ii. v. 14. And thus, ver. 20. 'Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.' Agreeable to this notion idolatry is styled whoredom in the Old Testament; and the great powers which spread idolatry in the world were characterised under the image of a great whore: in which manner of speaking the writers of the Old Testament had led the way; and nobody is at a loss to understand their meaning, when they charged the people with going a whoring after other gods; and there is as little reason to misunderstand the council; for what more have they done than to forbid idolatry, and all the impurities that attended it?

What has been said in few words, (very few, the importance of the subject considered,) may show us the foundation and the proper bounds of church authority in holy Scripture; and they show us at the same time the true foundation on which our reformation from the church of Rome stands. If the church of Rome asks us why we have departed from some articles, which they account articles of faith; our answer is, because they are no part of 'the faith once delivered to the saints:' if they urge us with the authority of the church which has received them, our answer is, no church has, nor have all churches together, any authority to make articles of faith; that 'Christ Jesus was the author and the finisher of the faith,' to which nothing can be added, from which nothing can be taken: if they ask us why we have discarded much of their ceremony and discipline; we may, without entering into the merit of particular cases, answer, that the church of England has as much authority to appoint rules of order and discipline for their members as the church of Rome has for theirs; that

these rules have been settled on prudential considerations of the circumstances of England, of which the church of England was a far better judge than the church of Rome. But,

Secondly, if, according to the apostolical rule in the text, we are to 'contend for the faith once delivered to the saints,' the question will be, where we are to find this faith, and how to distinguish it from the addition of later ages?

When our Saviour came into the world, the case of the Jewish church was in this respect the same with ours: the evil had been long growing, and the ancient prophets had taken notice of it. In the prophet Isaiah God reproves the nation for this crime, that 'their fear towards him was taught by the precept of man:' ch. xxix. ver. 13. But yet notwithstanding these admonitions in our Saviour's time, the traditions were in such esteem, that they were appealed to in every case as a decisive authority; and the Scribes and Pharisees were so secure in this point, that they challenge our Lord to answer this question, 'Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?' Matt. xv. 2. The very question this, which is daily put to us by the church of Rome, and the darling point insisted on by their emissaries, by which they scare ignorant people into a blind submission to their authority. But hear our Saviour's answer to the question, when put to him: 'Why do you also transgress the commandments of God by your tradition?' A question hard to be answered, and which the great rulers of the church of Rome should consider well; for they are much concerned in it.

If the church of Rome pretends to have received by oral tradition doctrines derived originally from the Apostles, the Jewish doctors had the same plea, and referred their traditions up to Moses, from whom, as they suppose, they received them by an uninterrupted succession continued to their own times.

The Jews had the writings of Moses and the Prophets, and the church of Rome has the writings of the Apostles and Evangelists; but neither did the Jews allow their Scriptures, nor does the church of Rome allow theirs, to be a complete rule; but both recur to tradition to supply what they suppose to be wanting in their sacred writings. But now consider how

our blessed Saviour treated this pretence of the Jewish church, and it will be a very good direction to us how to behave in a case which is so very much the same: he speaks of them as human inventions; as doctrines of their own, and not doctrines of God: 'Laying aside the commandment of God,' says he, 'ye hold the tradition of men:' Mark vii. 8. And again, ver. 9. 'Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.' In the following verses he shows them how their tradition contradicted the law of Moses, and then tells them, 'You make the word of God of none effect through your tradition which ye have delivered;' manifestly considering the written law of Moses as the commandment of God, and the traditions of the elders as the law of men and of their own making.

Moses and the Prophets make the Scripture of the Jews, and to them our Lord constantly appeals: he bids the Jews 'search the Scriptures;' tells them, 'they err, not knowing the Scriptures;' and when the Pharisees put a question to him concerning divorce, tempting him, his answer is, 'What did Moses command you?' And when he told the Pharisees that on the two commandments, of loving God and our neighbor, 'hang all the law and the prophets,' he plainly told them that the law and the prophets contained the whole of their religion, and that they had no other rule to go by: for had he considered the traditions of the elders as a rule of religion, he must have reduced them to his general precepts likewise.

In the well-known parable of the rich man and Lazarus, our Saviour has, in the person of Abraham, fully determined this point. The rich man desires that Lazarus may be sent from the dead to warn his brethren that they come not to that place of torment: Abraham refuses this request for this reason, because his brethren wanted no means to instruct them in the right way. What was their rule then? Abraham tells him, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'

The application of this case is so easily made to our own, that there is hardly any reason to insist on it particularly. The Jewish church had Moses and the Prophets, and abounded with traditions of their own, taught and received as essential

to their religion. What our Saviour thought of their traditions, what of the law and the Prophets, you have heard. The Christian church likewise has the Apostles and Evangelists; they have also too many traditionary doctrines, which have no foundation in Holy Writ: what are we to do then? Do we want better authority than that of our Saviour to reject the traditions of men, and to hold fast the doctrine of the Apostles and Prophets of the gospel? that is, as St. Jude exhorts us, to 'contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.'

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE LXII.

ROMANS, CHAP. XIII.—VERSE 1.

We have, in this and the following verses, the duty which subjects owe to their temporal governors, taught and maintained by several arguments; to understand the sense and propriety of which, we must consider the circumstances of the time, place, and persons here concerned. There is no appearance in the gospel that our Saviour intended to alter the civil governments of the world. His errand was of a different nature; and he speaks of government only as occasion required. In Matt. xxii. 17. we find a captious question put to him by the Pharisees, whether it was lawful to pay tribute to the Roman emperor or not? The question arose from hence; that a certain Jewish sect held this payment to be unlawful. The author of this opinion was Judas of Galilee, who, when the nation was ordered to be taxed, raised a great rebellion. His fate is related fully by Josephus, and mentioned by Gamaliel in Acts v. 37. By degrees they gathered strength, and in the reign of Claudius ravaged many places in Samaria: their pretence for freedom was, as we learn from St. Chrysostom, that being the freemen of God, they ought not to be the subjects or slaves of men. They were called Galileans, their founder being of that country, as also many of his followers. By this name Christians went in the first ages; they are so called by several heathen writers: Julian thus also designates them. Hence the Christians going by the name of Galileans were thought by the heathens to entertain the opinions of those who refused obedience to earthly princes, and were for setting up an independent government.

Thus Tertullus the orator accused St. Paul, (Acts xxiv. 5.); thus also did the Jews accuse the Christians to the magistrates of Thessalonica, (Acts xvii. 16.) Hence that question of the Pharisees, *Is it lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar?* for they hoped to have found something whereof to have impeached our Saviour before the Roman governor. The collectors of tax seem to have had the same jealousy concerning our Saviour, when in Matth. xvii. 24. they inquired of St. Peter whether his Master would pay tribute or no; to which he answers, *yes:* and our Saviour, though he intimates that he ought to have been exempted, says to St. Peter, when he had cast his hook into the sea, and taken the piece of money from the mouth of the fish, 'Give it them as tribute for me and yourself, *lest we should offend them.*' This scandal, which he and his Apostles lay under, urged both him and them to vindicate themselves, and to teach their followers such obedience to the higher powers as might leave no pretence for such an accusation. That the Apostles had reference to the same in pressing obedience of all kinds on their disciples, is evident from the argument with which they close their instructions; *that the word of God be not blasphemed,* or *evil spoken of:* this text commented on, showing that Christians were more liable to reproach in this case than in any other: hence the reason why our Lord bids St. Peter pay the tribute: hence St. Paul's orders to Titus, ch. ii. 5. and 10.: also Tim. vi. 1. See also 1 Peter, ii. 15. 16. Besides these reasons, drawn from the Apostles' own writings, St. Jerome, in his comment on Tit. iii. 1., and St. Chrysostom, on Rom. xiii., teach the same thing. Hence we may see why the Apostles so earnestly press their new converts with a more than ordinary obedience to their governors: the honor of Christ and the gospel was nearly concerned in their behavior, which ought to be dearer to them than their lives: this point enlarged on. St. Paul more especially labors this point, when he writes to the Christians at Rome, where the least disorder would be

soonest taken notice of, and most improved to the prejudice of the gospel. If we examine what St. Paul has taught on this point, we shall find it built on reasons purposely adapted to confute the error of the Galileans and some judaizing Christians, and to require such a scrupulous obedience as might clear the gospel and its professors from the scandal thrown on them by the heathen. The doctrine of the former part of the text opposes that of the Galileans; and is supported in the latter part by arguments peculiarly adapted to combat their error. He allows what they say to be true respecting God; but this is so far from exempting them from subjection to temporal power, that it proves the contrary: for the power of the magistrate being delegated from God, is therefore more especially to be regarded by those who pretend in a peculiar manner to be his servants. It was obvious to object to this reasoning, that the powers then in being could not be ordained by God, because they had thwarted all his purposes. To prevent which he purposely adds, *αἱ δὲ οὖσαι ἐξουσίαι*, the powers which *now be*, are ordained of God; whence he draws this consequence, *whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.* In what sense the rulers of the world may be said to be the ordinance of God, and to derive their power from him, is to be found from the state of the world, which requires them to protect the innocent and defend the weak: therefore to pretend an exemption from their power is to act in opposition to his will. As some pretended to withdraw their obedience from the prince, because they had been made partakers of the freedom of the gospel, so others in a state of servitude thought they had a right to throw off their bondage for the same reason: the Apostle therefore uses the same way of arguing with them, exhorting them to submit to their masters as unto God. Thus he lays down this general rule: *Let every man abide in the same calling*, &c. (1 Cor. vii. 20.); which he particularises in Ephes. vi. 5. 7. The same is somewhat dif-

ferently expressed in Col. iii.: and is treated with some warmth in 1 Tim. vi. 3-5. In all these passages he plainly refers to the opinion of such as taught that the gospel had introduced a perfect state of freedom, and therefore teaches his converts that Christianity should make them better, not worse servants; since they ought to obey from the heart, as serving God and not men. St. Peter also teaches the same: *submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.* Hence it is plain that the Apostle's argument is chiefly directed against those who were for making religion the cloak of disloyalty, on the specious pretence of setting up the Lord Jesus. The Apostle uses a second argument to inforce his doctrine, laid down at first in the words of the text: *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers:* and here the first doubt is, where the argument begins; for the words immediately following those last treated of may either be taken as the first of the second argument, or as a farther conclusion drawn from the first: *and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.* If they who resist the power, do resist the ordinance of God, then this consequence is so evident, that it can lose nothing of its force should it be taken as introducing a new argument; which on the whole it seems to do: reasons for this given. To go on with the argument: it is drawn from the common topic of hope and fear; and by setting before us both the power and right of our governors to punish us, when we refuse to acknowlege their authority, it tacitly warns us to expect no protection from God against their just anger: it is absurd to expect assistance from God in opposition to his own authority delegated to earthly powers. The gospel in every page encourages its disciples to bear up against the afflictions or persecutions of the world, and to be exceeding glad, because their reward shall be great in heaven; but lest those who suffered as seditious subjects should entertain these hopes, he also warns them that the prince acts by the will of God in punishing such offenders.

St. Peter, on the same subject, has the same view before him, (iv. 14. 15.) as he had before observed; *what glory is it, if when ye shall be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently?* St. Paul's second argument therefore is not a mere prudential motive to obedience; but it teaches us that we shall not only suffer, but deserve to suffer, which every Christian ought to fear more than the evil itself. The steps of the argument are, *they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation*, that is, punishment or judgment; the reason follows: *for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil:* hence we infer that by *good works* obedience is especially meant; and by *evil works*, resistance: else his reason will not contain the proof of his doctrine: yet the Apostle is now disputing with those who considered themselves justified by the gospel in not thinking the resistance here spoken of an evil work. Does he then beg this most material point? No: but from his first argument, that whoever resists the power resisteth the ordinance of God, he proves resistance to be an evil work: he then shows the prince's power over such workers of iniquity; *wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.* This was a strange assertion, if understood of good works in general: St. Paul knew that to obey the gospel, to reject idolatry, was to do good; yet that those who did so, far from having the praise of their rulers, were daily tormented by them: he knew that to preach the gospel was a good work, yet that he himself for so doing had been in perils and in danger of his life. How then could he assure his converts that if they did good, they should have praise of their rulers? But the difficulty vanishes, if we take *good* in the limited sense of the Apostle. By this reasoning the *good* must mean the same thing with *good works;* and we have shown *good works* to signify the work of *obedience:* hence, *do that which is good* means, *pay due obedience:* and then this proposition is universally true; for obedience is

a good work; and be princes what they may, they will always praise it; and we are sure to get this good by it, a quiet life at least. This exposition also suits St. Paul's main design, which was to inculcate obedience to the higher powers: temperance, chastity, and the other virtues were out of this question: if the Apostle then keeps to his point, the good thing he recommends is that of obedience; and the word in the original, rendered *good* in our translation, is appropriated by St. Paul and St. Peter to denote the good of obedience in opposition to that evil spirit which sets a government at nought. The promise made to obedience is, *thou shalt have praise of the same.* What is meant by *praise* may be understood from St. Peter, who speaks of governors sent *for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well:* where praise must denote protection and encouragement, the only proper rewards good subjects can expect. And this will explain the words, *for he is the minister of God to thee for good.* The Apostle had promised *reward* to the obedient: he then supports it by these words. To be a minister for good then, must denote his being appointed by God as a dispenser of rewards; else the argument is lame: for if any other good be meant, the consequence is false; but if he be appointed by God to dispense rewards to those who do well, and if obedience be the good work, we have reason to expect reward for our obedience. And this sense will appear the true one by comparing the former and latter part of the verse together: for the Apostle goes on, *but if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain.* He then adds, *for he is a minister of God:* for what? He had before called him a dispenser of rewards, a minister of God for good; here then he should have called him one *for evil:* but the expression being too harsh, he uses a periphrasis, and says he is *a revenger to execute wrath on him that doeth evil.* This expounds a minister for good to be an encourager of him that doeth well. Compare all the parts,

and there can be no doubt: this comparison fully drawn out. What good we are to expect from kings and governors, St. Paul has told us, 1 Tim. ii. 2. The peace of society is the very end of temporal government; and when promoted by those in authority, then they are justly to be esteemed as ministers of God for good to the people, who in return are bound to obey; and this intitles them to the praise and protection of those in authority. By these two arguments St. Paul supports his doctrine of obedience: that they are rightly divided he himself bears witness in the next verse; *wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake:* here he refers only to two arguments, one drawn from wrath, and one from conscience: the former respects the present life and the magistrate's power; for the wrath of God is included in the latter, which is no argument without it; for what is conscience where there is no fear of God? You must then submit for wrath, because the magistrate has the power of God to execute wrath on him that doeth evil; for conscience, since he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God. The sixth verse only mentions a particular instance of obedience, the paying tribute, as being the very ground of this dispute. St. Paul, under the duties of subjection, comprehends not only those owing to kings, but to every superior; nay, even to our equals: Rom. xiii. 1.; and thus concludes, *owe no man any thing, but to love one another;* referring even the duties of love to this head of subjection: but more on this point hereafter. The Apostle's concern was with such as were for denying the right of government, and being every man his own king; he did not therefore intend to consider the measures and limits of the power of earthly princes; nor can the argument reach this point, nor has Scripture meddled with it: it has commanded obedience to all governors, and left us the laws and constitutions of our country to know who they are, and what they are. The Apostle, in teaching this doctrine,

was chiefly concerned for the honor of the gospel, and exhorted to obedience, that the name of God and Christ might not be blasphemed. Had he taught the Christians at Rome that the emperor was ordained by God for their good, and that they were bound to obey him only so long as he was good to them; would this have cleared them of the scandal they lay under? No: it would have justified it, and confirmed this maxim to the powers of the world, that if Christianity prevailed, their authority must sink. Notice taken of St. Peter's doctrine on this subject. His Epistle is directed to the strangers scattered throughout divers countries: for in the ninth year of Claudius, the Jews, under which name the Christians also were plainly comprehended, (Acts xviii.) were banished Rome for tumults occasioned by their disputes. This banishment is mentioned by Suetonius, and St. Luke in the Acts. St. Peter therefore was necessarily to press obedience in his exhortation to his scattered flock, (ii. 11. 12.): then follows the general precept: *submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake*, &c. Here St. Peter is supposed to teach us that kings are the ordinance of man: if so, he has contradicted St. Paul, who expressly tells us that *the powers which be are ordained of God*; which clear doctrine should make us cautious how we expound St. Peter to a different meaning. His original words are *πάσῃ ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει*. Now *κτίσις* signifies sometimes in Scripture *a creature*, and the adjective joined with it, *human*: thus the doctrine is plain; submit yourselves to every human creature, or to every man, for the Lord's sake. How it signifies any thing made by man is unintelligible: *ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία* is not wisdom made by man, but that wisdom which man has given to him by God; so, that *κτίσις ἀνθρωπίνη* is *a human creature* will appear from the whole tenor of his discourse. It is usual with the best writers to set down the doctrine in general words, and then to deduce the particulars: this is St. Peter's method in the place before us. These particular cases detailed, which

are plainly included in the general rule, show the absurdity of our version of this phrase: nay, St. Peter goes lower, and commands us to love the brotherhood: so that we may as well say we made our brother, because we must love him, as our king, because we must obey him. It was observed before, how St. Paul derived the duties of subjection so low as to the love of one another: St. Peter does the same. St. Paul's general rule is, *render to all their dues:* St. Peter's is, *submit to every human creature.* St. Paul concludes, *owe no man any thing, but to love one another:* St. Peter, *yea, all of you be subject one to another.* Thus both take all degrees of duty into the doctrine of submission; so nearly do they agree: if St. Paul has said that the higher powers are ordained of God, St. Peter has said as much, by telling us that so is the will of God, that with well-doing we may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. If St. Paul has said, we must obey for conscience sake, St. Peter has affirmed that obedience is the will of God. Concluding observations.

DISCOURSE LXII.

ROMANS, CHAP. XIII.—VERSE 1.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

We have, in this and the following verses, the duty which subjects owe to their temporal governors, both taught and maintained by several reasons and arguments: the sense and propriety of which arguments clearly to understand, it will be necessary for us to consider the circumstances of the time, and place, and persons here concerned.

There is no appearance in the gospel that our Saviour intended to make any alterations in the civil governments of the world. He came on another errand, of quite a different nature: he never purposely enters on the subject of government, that being no necessary part of his doctrine; but treats of it only as he was led by particular occasions.

In the twenty-second chapter of St. Matthew, we find a captious question put to him by the Pharisees, whether it were lawful to pay tribute to the Roman emperor or not? The question arose from hence: there was at that time a sect among the Jews, who held it to be unlawful to pay any tribute to the Roman emperor, or to yield any obedience to his laws. The author of this opinion was Judas of Galilee; who, when the Roman emperor ordered the nation to be taxed, raised on that account a great rebellion; persuaded the people to stand by their liberties, and not to submit to such a mark of slavery as paying of tribute. The fate of this man is related fully by Josephus; and is mentioned likewise by Gamaliel, in Acts v. 37. 'After this man rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished,

and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.' But though they were for the present dispersed, yet by degrees they gathered strength, and were the authors of many troubles; and in the reign of Claudius were strong enough to ravage and destroy many places in Samaria. Their pretence for freedom was, as we learn from St. Chrysostom, that they were the servants of the Lord, and therefore owed no subjection to any human creature; that they were the freemen of God, and ought not therefore to be the slaves or the subjects of men. This sect went by the name of Galileans; the author of it being of that country, as likewise many of his followers.

Now it is well known that this was a name by which the Christians went in the first ages: they are mentioned under this name by several heathen writers; and that it was in use among all who spoke contemptuously of Christ and his religion, even so late as in Julian's time, we learn from his writings still remaining, where he often speaks of the Christians under the name of Galileans. And hence it came to pass that the Christians going by the name of Galileans were generally thought by the heathens to entertain the same opinions with the sect of that name; that is, they were taken to be men of seditious principles, who refused obedience to earthly princes, and were for setting up an independent government of their own. Thus when Tertullus the orator accuses St. Paul, he charges him with being 'a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarines:' Acts xxiv. 5. Of this calumny we find the unbelieving Jews also making their advantage against the Christians; for thus they accuse them to the magistrates of Thessalonica, 'These who have turned the world upside down are come hither also:' Acts xvii. 6.

On this ground then it was that the Pharisees put that insidious question to our Saviour, 'Is it lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar?' hoping, no doubt, to have found something whereof to have impeached him before the Roman governor. The collectors of tax seem likewise to have had the same jealousy concerning our Saviour, when, in the seventeenth of St. Matthew, they inquire of St. Peter whether his Master would pay tribute or no? for it is probable by their question that

they took our Lord for one of the new teachers, who set up in defiance of the Roman emperor: to which St. Peter answers, Yes. And our Saviour, though he intimates that he ought to have been exempted from paying tribute, yet, knowing what suspicions there were concerning him, and what use would have been made of his refusal, orders St. Peter to go to the sea, and cast a hook, and take the fish that should come up, and open his mouth, where he should find a piece of money: That take, says he, and give them as tribute for me and yourself, 'lest we should offend them.'

Now, though our Saviour's business was not either to limit or to enlarge the civil governments of the world, yet this scandal which he and his disciples lay under, urged both him and them to vindicate themselves, and to teach their followers such obedience and submission to the higher powers, as might leave no pretence for such an accusation: accordingly our Saviour having drawn a confession from the Pharisees that the tribute-money belonged to Cæsar, answers, that they should 'render to Cæsar the things which were Cæsar's.'

That the Apostles likewise had reference to the same scandal in pressing obedience of all kinds on their disciples, whether considered as subjects, or servants, or wives, or children, is evident from hence, that they almost always close their instructions of this sort with this argument, 'That the word of God be not blasphemed' or 'evil spoken of:' an argument which in its own nature has no nearer relation to civil obedience than to any other good work; and it is as proper to exhort men to temperance and sobriety, to charity, and other the like virtues, that no scandal may be brought on the gospel, as it is to exhort them to obedience to their superiors. This motive therefore being almost ever urged in the case of obedience, shows plainly that the Christians were liable to reproach in this case more than any other. Our Lord bids St. Peter pay the tribute, 'lest,' says he, 'we should offend them;' and thus St. Paul, in his Epistle to Titus, ch. ii. ver. 5. orders Titus to admonish 'wives to be obedient to their own husbands, that that the word of God be not blasphemed;' and, ver. 10. to exhort 'servants to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things, that they may adorn the doc-

trine of God our Saviour in all things:' so likewise in the first Epistle to Timothy, ch. vi. ver. 1. the Apostle gives this exhortation, 'Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor;' and then he repeats the forementioned reason, 'that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed:' thus likewise St. Peter, pressing obedience to governors, gives this reason for it, 'For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:' 1 Peter ii. 15. that is, of such men as scandalise the doctrine of the gospel, as if it taught us to claim a freedom inconsistent with the obedience that subjects, and servants, and children, owed to their respective superiors: and with regard to this abused notion of Christian freedom, the Apostle adds, in the very next verse, 'As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.' Besides these reasons, drawn from the Apostle's own writings, to show with what view they so frequently insisted on and inculcated obedience of all kinds, we have to the same purpose the express authority of St. Jerome and St. Chrysostom. St. Jerome, in his comment on the Epistle to Titus, at these words, 'put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers,' gives this reason why the Apostle there, and elsewhere, insists on the obligations which Christians were under to obey their rulers: *quia Judæ Galilæi per illud tempus dogma adhuc vigebat, et habebat plurimos sectatores*—'Because the doctrine of Judas of Galilee yet prevailed at that time, and had many followers.' St. Chrysostom, in his comment on the thirteenth of the Romans, teaches us the same thing: Καὶ γὰρ πολὺς περιεφέρετο λόγος τότε, ἐπὶ στάσει καὶ καινοτομίᾳ διαβάλλων τοὺς ἀποστόλους, καὶ ὡς ἐπ' ἀνατροπῇ τῶν κοινῶν νόμων, ἅπαντα καὶ ποιοῦνται καὶ λέγονται.—'For there was at that time a strong report that the Apostles were seditious and innovators, and that their principles and practices tended to the subversion of the common laws.'

From this account it is easy to see what made the Apostles so frequently, so earnestly press their new converts to show a more than ordinary obedience to their masters and governors: the honor of Christ and the gospel was nearly concerned in their behavior, which ought to be dearer to them than their

lives, and to outweigh all other considerations whatever; and therefore they ought to bear every thing rather than give any umbrage to the enemies of the gospel, by pretending on any account, how plausible soever, to withstand the commands of their lawful governors. And for this reason St. Paul more especially labors the point, when he writes to the Christians at Rome, which was the ordinary residence of the emperor, and where any the least disorder would be the soonest taken notice of, and most improved to the prejudice of the gospel. And if you examine what St. Paul has taught concerning obedience and subjection to the higher powers, you will find it answer exactly to these circumstances now set before you, and to be built on reasons purposely adapted to confute the error of the Galileans and some Judaizing Christians, and to require such an exact and scrupulous obedience, as might clear the gospel and its professors from the scandal thrown on them by the heathen world.

'Let every soul,' says he, 'be subject unto the higher powers.' This is the doctrine laid down in opposition to such as taught that there were no higher powers who had any claim to their obedience, but that they were under the immediate government of God, and therefore owed no subjection to man. The Apostle supports his doctrine with arguments peculiarly adapted to combat the error he opposes, as you will perceive in the following words: 'For there is no power,' says he, 'but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.' As if he had said, You argue that you ought to be subject to God only, and to acknowlege no other power or authority but his. What you say is true: but so far is this reason from exempting you from the subjection to temporal power, that, well considered, it will prove just the contrary: for the power of the magistrate is a power delegated from God, and therefore more especially to be regarded by those who pretend in a peculiar manner to be the servants of God. It was obvious, to object against this reasoning, that the powers then in being could not be the powers ordained by God, because they so evidently thwarted all his purposes: they had put to death the Lord of life; they persecuted his followers; they were the supporters of superstition and idolatry, and the main obstacle in the way of the gospel:

to prevent which surmises the Apostle purposely adds, 'The powers which be,' αἱ δὲ οὖσαι ἐξουσίαι, the powers which 'now be,' are ordained of God. From these positions he draws the consequence in direct opposition to the principles and practices of those who were despisers of government: 'Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God.' To resist the ordinance of God was certainly inconsistent with their profession who pretended to dedicate themselves to the obedience of God; and so intirely, that for that reason they would own no obedience to any one else, lest they should seem to set up another to share with God in his right to their service. The Apostle so far allows their principle as to argue from it, and shows them that they cannot resist the civil power consistently with their resolutions of obeying God; because submitting to our earthly princes is part of the obedience which God requires from us. If we inquire in what particular sense the rulers of the world may be said to be the ordinance of God, and to derive their power and authority from him; we shall find that the state of the world requires that there should be some to rule, invested with power to protect the innocent, and to defend the weak from the violence of the oppressor: and therefore government is agreeable to the will of God; and to pretend an exemption from it would be acting in opposition to his will, and the order of his establishment.

As some pretended to withdraw their obedience from the prince, because they had been made partakers of the freedom of the gospel; so others, who were in a state of servitude, thought they had a right to throw off their bondage, supposing a state of slavery to be inconsistent with the liberty of the gospel of Christ: they went on the same reason which the others did, and pleaded their relation to God and Christ as a full release from the condition of slaves. The Apostle therefore uses the same way of arguing to them, and exhorts them to yield obedience to their masters as unto the Lord, as unto God; showing them that their masters, with respect to temporal affairs, stood in the place of God; and they were therefore to submit unto them as unto God. Thus in the seventh chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle lays down this general rule, 'Let every man abide in the same calling

wherein he is called;' that is, as he explains himself, whether he be servant, or whether he be free, let him not think that his condition is repugnant to his religion: if he be servant, let him so continue. 'Servants,' says he, in the sixth of the Ephesians, 'be obedient unto them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.' The same is repeated, with some small variety of expression, in the third of the Colossians: and in 1 Tim. vi. he treats of this matter with some warmth, and affirms that this doctrine of obedience is the law of God, and that whoever denies it 'consents not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; but is proud, knowing nothing, doting about questions and strife of words—supposing gain to be godliness.' In all which it is plain he refers to the opinion of such as taught that the gospel had introduced a perfect state of freedom, dissolving all the ancient ties between masters and servants: in opposition to which he teaches them that their being Christians should make them better, not worse servants; for that they ought to obey from the heart, as serving God, and not men. St. Peter likewise uses the same argument with the same view: 'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.' Hence then it is plain that the Apostle's argument is directed against those principally who were for dissolving all the obligations between the prince and the subject; who were for making religion the cloak of disloyalty, and for throwing down all power and authority of earthly princes, on the specious pretence of setting up the Lord Jesus. And therefore, as to the original of the prince's power, we may, on the Apostle's word, assert it to be divine, as being derived immediately from God, and used and exercised in his name, and by his authority.

To proceed: the Apostle uses a second argument to inforce his doctrine laid down at first in the words of the text, 'Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.' And here the first doubt is, where the argument begins; for the words

immediately following those last treated of may either be taken as the first of the second argument, or as a farther conclusion drawn from the first: 'And they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.' If they who resist the power do resist the ordinance of God, it may certainly be affirmed by evident consequence, that they who resist shall receive to themselves damnation: so evident a consequence, that it can lose nothing of its force, though these words should not be understood to contain it, but should be taken as introducing a new argument, as on the whole I incline to think they ought to be taken. For the words immediately following contain a reason of something going before; 'For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil;' but this will not prove that all who resist shall be damned; for rulers are not the judges in the case of damnation: but if we understand the Apostle in these words, 'All who resist shall receive to themselves damnation,' as entering on a new topic, and setting forth the certain evil consequences which even in this life should attend the seditious, who would render themselves justly obnoxious to the powers of the world, and be liable to their censure, it then very properly follows, 'For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.'

To show that the language in the original admits of this sense, or that the present division of verses is no authority on one side or the other, is a labor I may well save myself in this audience. Let us go on then to consider the argument: it is drawn from the common topic of hope and fear, and represents to us the danger of disobeying our governors, by setting before us not only their power, but their right and their duty to punish, when we refuse to acknowlege their authority: and by showing the prince's duty to punish such offenders, in consequence of the commission given him by God, it tacitly warns us to expect no protection from God against the just anger and indignation of our princes; since in punishing the stubborn offenders they do but execute the will and command of God: in which case it is absurd to depend on any assistance or protection from him, in opposition to his own authority delegated to earthly powers.

The gospel does, in every page, encourage its disciples to bear up against the afflictions of the world, to rejoice when they

are persecuted and evil intreated, and to be exceeding glad, because their reward shall be great in heaven: but lest those who suffered as seditious subjects should entertain themselves with these hopes, the Apostle takes care to represent the prince as acting by the will and power of God, in punishing such offenders. What fruit then could those sufferings yield, which were not only the effect of man's wrath, but also of the justice of God? St. Peter, on the same subject, has evidently the same view before him: 'If ye be reproached,' says he, 'for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth on you: but let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or an evil doer:' for, as he had before observed, 'What glory is it if, when ye shall be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently?'

St. Paul's second argument therefore is not a mere prudential motive to obedience, showing us what may probably be expected from an angry governor; but goes farther, and teaches that we shall not only suffer, but also deserve to suffer: which every Christian ought rather to fear than the evil itself. The particular steps of the argument are as follow: 'They that resist shall receive to themselves damnation,' that is, punishment, or judgment. The reason follows: 'For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.' It is plain here, from the force of the inference, that by 'good works,' obedience is especially meant; and by 'evil works,' resistance; for otherwise the Apostle's reason will not contain the proof of his doctrine: for it is not certain that those who resist shall be punished, because rulers are a terror to evil works, unless resistance be meant or included in evil works: and yet the Apostle is now disputing with those who thought the gospel justified them in not submitting to their governors, and who could not therefore think the resistance here spoken of an evil work. Does he then beg this point, of all others in this controversy the most material? No: but he builds on the strength of his first argument, where he had shown that whoever resists the power resisteth the ordinance of God; which is enough to prove resistance an evil work: which being proved, he goes on to show the prince's power over such workers of iniquity: 'Wilt thou then,' says he, 'not be afraid of the power? Do

that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.' This was a strange assertion, if understood of good works in general: St. Paul knew surely that to obey the gospel, to reject idolatry, to renounce the polluted feasts of the Gentiles, was to do good: yet he knew that those who did so, far from having the praise of the rulers, were daily punished and tormented by them: he knew that to preach the gospel was a good work; and yet he knew that he for so doing had been in perils often, in bonds and imprisonments, and in danger of his life. How then could he assure his converts that if they did that which was good they should have praise of their rulers, when they felt the contrary every day? But this difficulty vanishes, if we take 'good' in that limited sense in which the Apostles use it: 'Rulers,' says he, 'are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.' It naturally follows, 'Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.' It is evident, by the course of reasoning, that the 'good' in the latter part of the verse must mean the same thing with 'good works' in the first part: and I observed before that the Apostle's argument necessarily required that, by 'good works,' we should especially understand the work of 'obedience:' consequently, when the Apostle says, 'Do that which is good,' his meaning is, 'Pay due obedience.' And then his proposition is universally true; for obedience is a good work; and let princes be what they will, they will always praise and encourage obedience: which is one good reason for obeying, in all cases, as far as we can; for we are sure to get this by it, a quiet life at least.

Besides, this exposition suits with St. Paul's main design; which was to inculcate obedience to the higher power. What other good then could he properly recommend on this subject? Temperance, chastity, charity, and all other virtues, were out of this question: obedience was the thing doubted of. If the Apostle then keeps to his point, the good thing he recommends must needs be the good of obedience; and the word in the original, which is rendered by the word 'good' in our translation, is appropriated both by St. Paul and St. Peter to denote the good of obedience, in opposition to the evil spirit which set a government at nought. The promise made to obedience is in these words, 'Thou shalt have praise of the same.' What is

meant by 'praise,' may be understood by the parallel place in St. Peter, who speaks of governors sent 'for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well:' where praise being opposed to punishment, must denote protection and encouragement; which are the only proper rewards which good subjects can expect from their governors: and so it signifies in the place before us. And this will help us to understand the following words: 'For he is the minister of God to thee for good.' The Apostle had promised 'reward' to the obedient: he supports it by this reason; for he, the ruler, is 'the minister of God to thee for good.' To be a minister for good then, must denote his being appointed by God as a dispenser of rewards; or else the argument is lame: for, if any other good be meant, the consequence is false; for it does not follow that the obedient shall be rewarded, because the prince is a minister of some other good: which is no way related to rewarding the good: but if he be appointed by God to dispense rewards to those who do well, and if obedience be the good work, I have then good reason to expect reward for my obedience.

And this sense will appear undeniably to be the true one, by comparing the former and latter part of the verse together: for the Apostle goes on, 'But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain.' Then he adds the very same argument which he had used before: 'for he is the minister of God:' a minister for what? He had before, where he treated of him as a dispenser of rewards, called him a minister of God for good: here he speaks of him as a dispenser of punishment; he should therefore have called him a minister of God 'for evil:' but that was too harsh an expression; and therefore he uses a periphrasis instead of it: for he is the minister of God, 'a revenger to execute wrath on him that doth evil.' This shows us how to expound his being a minister for good, that is, a protector and encourager to him that doth well. Compare all the parts, and I think there can be no doubt. The evil are threatened; why? Because the ruler is the minister of God: the minister, to what purpose? He tells you: a revenger to execute wrath on him that doth evil. On the other side, the obedient are encouraged to expect

reward: why? For the same reason; because the ruler is a minister of God for this purpose also: and, consequently, a minister for good must denote a dispenser of good to him that doth good.

What good we are to expect from kings and governors St. Paul has told us; requiring that we should 'pray for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty:' 1 Tim. ii. 2. The peace and quiet of society is the very end of temporal government; and when it is duly promoted by those in authority, then have they a just claim to be esteemed as ministers of God for good to the people; who, in return for this good received of the prince, are bound on their part to yield obedience and submission; which is the thing will intitle them to the praise and protection of those in authority over them.

These are the two arguments by which St. Paul supports his doctrine of obedience: that I have rightly divided them he himself shall bear witness, who in the next verse sums up his reasoning in these words; 'Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.' You see he refers to two arguments, and two only: one drawn from wrath, one from conscience. The argument from wrath respects the present life and the magistrate's power: for the wrath of God is included in the argument from conscience, which indeed is no argument without it; for what is conscience where there is no fear of God? You must then submit for wrath, because the magistrate has the power of God to execute wrath on him that doth evil: you must submit for conscience; for he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God. The sixth verse contains no new argument; but mentions a particular instance of obedience, the paying tribute; which is therefore particularly mentioned, because, as I before observed, it was the very ground of this dispute.

I have but one thing more to observe on St. Paul, which is, that under the duties of subjection he comprehends not only those owing to kings and princes, but those owing to every superior, nay, those owing even to our equals: 'Render,' says he, 'to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor;'

and concludes with this general exhortation, 'Owe no man any thing, but to love one another;' referring even the duties of love to this head of subjection. I mention this now for the use I shall make of it hereafter.

It is plain that the Apostle's concern was with such as denied even the right of government, and were for being every man his own king: it was not therefore before him to consider distinctly the measures and limits of the power of earthly princes; nor can the argument be extended to reach this point. He asserts the magistrate to be ordained of God, and the ruler's power to be the ordinance of God: but it will not from hence appear what are the limits of this power; for all power ordained by God is not infinite, nor of the same extent. All our natural powers are ordained by God, and he has divided to every man as seemeth best to him. The least power is his ordinance, as well as the greatest: and therefore the extent of power cannot appear from this, that it is the ordinance of God; since all power, whether great or little, is ordained by him. Nor has the Scripture, that I know of, ever meddled with this point: it has commanded obedience to all governors, and left us the laws and constitutions of our country to know who they are and what they are.

The Apostle, in teaching this doctrine, was chiefly concerned for the honor of the gospel; and exhorted to obedience, that the name of God and of Christ might not be blasphemed. Had St. Paul taught the Christians at Rome that the emperor was ordained by God for their good, and that they were bound to obey him as long as he was good to them and no longer; would this, do you think, have cleared them of the scandal they lay under of being enemies to government? Would they have had 'praise' of the power for this doctrine? No: it would rather have justified all the reproaches cast on them, and confirmed the powers of the world in the opinion that, if ever Christianity prevailed, their authority must sink.

I cannot conclude my discourse without taking notice of St. Peter's doctrine on this subject. His Epistle is directed to the strangers scattered throughout divers countries; for in the ninth year of the emperor Claudius, the Jews, under which name the Christians were comprehended, as is plain from the eighteenth

of the Acts, were banished Rome for tumults and seditions occasioned by their disputes. This banishment is mentioned by Suetonius, and the writer of the Acts in the place last quoted. St. Peter therefore, in his Epistle, was necessarily to mention and press obedience, the want of which had occasioned their present distress. Thus then he exhorts his scattered flock: 'Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers;' that is, as disobedient subjects, which is also, as I showed, St. Paul's notion of evil-doers; 'they may by your good works which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.' Then follows the general precept: 'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake;' whether it be to the king or to governors; and the like.*

Here then St. Peter is supposed to have determined the great point, and taught us that kings are the ordinance of man, made by the people: if he has, I am sure he has contradicted St. Paul, who has expressly told us that 'the powers which be are ordained of God:' which clear doctrine of St. Paul should, I think, make us cautious how we expound St. Peter

* If we compare St. Peter and St. Paul together, and consider the subject they were on, we shall find it necessary to take the τὸ ἀγαθὸν in the restrained sense here mentioned: for what other good could they mean, consistently with their argument and their subject? for the only evil thing which they had to contend with was an opposition to all government in general; the good therefore they would recommend was necessarily to be submission in general. In the same restrained sense St. Peter sometimes uses καλὸν, 1 Ep. ii. 12. &c. ἵνα ἐν ᾧ καταλαλοῦσιν ὑμῶν ὡς κακοποιῶν, ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων, ἐποπτεύσαντες, δοξάσωσι τὸν Θεὸν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπισκοπῆς. At ver. 15. and at ver. 20. it plainly appears that ἀγαθοποιεῖν is equivalent to καλοποιεῖν, and that both expressions mean a general submission to government. We meet with the same word again in the course of the argument, ch. iii. ver. 5. &c. where St. Peter having mentioned the duty of submission, which Sarah paid to Abraham, exhorts wives to follow her example, whose daughters they were, ἀγαθοποιοῦσαι; which he explains by ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσι. So that there can be no doubt of the use of the word in this place.

to a different meaning. St. Peter's original words are, *πάσῃ ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει*. How they came to be rendered, 'to every ordinance of man,' I profess myself not to understand. *Κτίσις* signifies sometimes in Scripture 'a creature,' and the adjective joined with it signifies 'human:' according to which St. Peter's doctrine is plain: Submit yourselves to every human creature, or to every man, for the Lord's sake. How *κτίσις ἀνθρωπίνη* should signify a creature, or any thing else made by man, I know not: *ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία* is not wisdom made by man, but the wisdom which man has given him by God; so *κτίσις ἀνθρωπίνη* is not a creature made by man, but 'a human creature:' and that this is St. Peter's true meaning will appear from the whole tenor of his discourse. It is usual with the best writers to set down the doctrine in general words, and then to deduce the particulars: this is St. Peter's method in the place before us: Submit, says he, yourselves to every human creature. This is the general point. He immediately descends to particulars: he begins with the king, as supreme; goes from him to governors appointed by him: at the eighteenth verse he comes to servants, whom he commands to be subject to their masters with all fear: when he has done with them, he goes to wives, ordering them to be in subjection to their own husbands. All these particulars are plainly included in the general rule; and consequently there is as much reason to say, from St. Peter, that the husband of every woman is made by the people, as that the king of every country is: nay, St. Peter goes lower; and as a precept deducible from his general rule, he commands us to love the brotherhood: so that I may as well say that I made my brother, because I must love him, as that I made my king, because I must obey him. I observed to you before how St. Paul derived the duties of subjection so low as to the love of one another: St. Peter, you see, does the same. St. Paul's general rule is, ch. xiii. ver. 7. 'Render to all their dues:' St. Peter's is, 'Submit to every human creature.' St. Paul concludes, ver. 8. 'Owe no man any thing, but to love one another:' St. Peter, ch. v. ver. 5. 'Yea, all of you be subject one to another.' You see the same reasoning in both, that both take in all degrees of duty into the doctrine of submission.

You see how nearly the Apostles agree: if St. Paul has

said that the higher powers are ordained of God; has not St. Peter said as much, by telling us that so is the will of God, that with well-doing we may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men? If St. Paul has said, we must obey for conscience' sake; are we not under the same obligation, by knowing, from St. Peter, that obedience is the will of God?

The commentators have given themselves unnecessary trouble in inquiring into the characters of the princes at the time these Epistles were written; for the dispute was with those who rejected all sorts of government, whether they were under good or bad princes: with the temporal rights of princes they meddled not. St. Peter, who wrote to the dispersed in Asia, where the governments had always been despotic, exhorted them, in the first place, to due obedience to the king, and then to those who were put in authority under him: whereas St. Paul, in writing to the Romans, where the form of government was not fully established, being in the hands of the emperor, sometimes with and sometimes without the concurrence of the senate, made choice of an expression that has avoided that difficulty, and directs obedience to be paid to the higher powers, without determining who they were; which was a point in which he had no right to interpose his authority.

I shall leave this subject without drawing any consequences, excepting one only, for the sake of which I entered into this inquiry; namely, that the Scriptures are not to be tortured to speak in favor of one side or another; for they stand clear of all disputes about the rights of princes and subjects: so that such disputes must be left to be decided by principles of natural equity and the constitutions of the country.

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE LXIII.

GENESIS, CHAP. XVIII.—VERSE 19.

THESE words of the Lord concerning Abraham contain the reason why God made choice of him, to make of him a nation to whom should be *committed the oracles of God:* the verse before the text contains the same sentiment. It has been matter of difficulty with curious inquirers to assign the reasons of God's regard to Abraham and his posterity, while the rest of the world was permitted to remain in ignorance and superstition: it is not intended to examine all the reasons that may be assigned for this selection; but since God has been pleased to give one, it concerns us to consider it, as instructing us how to render ourselves acceptable to God, and draw down a blessing on ourselves and our posterity: Gen. xviii. 18. 19. We may plainly see the connexion of the text with the preceding verse, and the reason given for the distinguishing mercy bestowed on Abraham, which is founded on these two propositions, and supposes the truth of them: first, that it is the duty of every father and master of a family so to command his children and household, that they shall keep the way of the Lord: and, secondly that the same duty is incumbent on the governors and magistrates of all nations. If we suppose the virtue here commended proper only to fathers and masters of families, the reason assigned in the text for making Abraham *a great and mighty nation* is very absurd: nay, it would rather have been a good one to keep all public authority out of his hands: this point enlarged on generally with respect to magistrates, and in its application to the present subject. It has been dis-

puted whether government is derived from the paternal authority, and is only the extension of it, or from the consent and choice of the people: a point of greater curiosity than use; since the rights of nations will be determined by their respective laws and usages, not by the speculations of philosophers. But as to religion, every magistrate's duty, with respect to his people, is the same as every father's with respect to his household. This was the case with Abraham; otherwise this care over his family could have been no reason for extending his authority over a great and mighty nation. The magistrate's care with respect to the religion of his people, and the father's with respect to that of his family, are so much the same, that they must stand or fall together; both having the same reasons to support them, and being liable to the same objections. If the father has his authority from God, is the case of the magistrate different? If the happiness of a family and its members consists in a due conformity to the principles of virtue and reason, and if it be the father's duty naturally to guard them against vice, is the happiness of a kingdom less concerned in the virtue of the people? or ought a prince less to regard the welfare of his subjects? Turn it as you will, the arguments are the same, and applicable to both cases. If you object to the magistrate's authority in religion, and the impropriety of temporal rewards and punishments, are they not as improper in the hands of a father as of a prince? This point enlarged on. From the text thus explained, it is inquired wherein the care of religion, public and private, consists, and the means necessary to its support are justified. If we consider the nature and disposition of mankind, we shall perceive two things necessary to guard the practice of virtue and religion, viz. instruction and correction: one, a proper remedy for the weakness of the understanding; the other, for the perverseness of the will. Where these two are joined together, the instruction is properly authoritative; and this is the case both of parents and magistrates;

therefore Abraham's care is expressed by the word *command*. The same precept, called *teaching* in Deut. xi. 19. is in xxxii. 46. called *commanding*. This duty princes cannot perform personally to all their people; therefore there has been an order of men set apart as teachers and ministers of religion in every civilised nation; which, on the footing of natural religion, the supreme power has doubtless a right to appoint: such was the case with the people of Rome; and had their religion been right, no fault could have been found with the constitution of their priesthood. This right under the law of Moses was limited to one family, while the priesthood under the gospel is confined to such methods of conveyance as Christ and his Apostles have appointed or approved; and being owned and established by the public, they have the commission and authority of the magistrate for the edification of the people. The power of correction is proper to be preserved in the hand of the magistrate, to be applied for the punishment of wickedness and vice, and for the maintenance of true religion and virtue. As these methods are necessary for the promoting and preserving the virtue of nations, so are they for the good government and improvement of private families: as to instruction separate from correction, no one but a friend to libertinism can object to it. Some have thought that, since God has given all men reason to direct them, they should be left to its guidance in discovering the truths of religion, without having any principles instilled into them by others, which they esteem only as so many prejudices. Not to insist how contrary this is to all the rules of Scripture which relate to the duty of parents, and to the practice of nations, it is enough to observe that had God intended this, he must have supplied all men with leisure for speculation as well as with reason. If men have so much reason as to be able to discover their duty without assistance, they can distinguish between truth and falsehood, when proposed to them by others, and are not in more

danger of being betrayed, than if left to themselves. Those who have not reason enough for this, must be governed by other methods. It is certain that general errors have been perpetuated by traditionary instruction, as well as general truths; but if an end must for this reason be put to all instruction, what single thing of use can be preserved in life? Must the world be starved, because some have suffered by intemperance? or left in ignorance, because some, through false teachers, have been miserably deceived? But the strongest objections lie against the use of correction in matters of religion. All allow the magistrate to punish crimes which injure the state, or private persons; a concession not to be despised in behalf of religion, since our duty to God and to our neighbor so concurs that he who punishes offences offered to men, will so far punish vice and immorality. Hence the plea for excluding the magistrate from matters of religion can only affect such cases where the honor of God alone is concerned, as profaneness, impiety, and the like. The reason assigned for this is, that human punishments cannot make men religious: they can make men comply outwardly with the law, but cannot reach to the purifying their hearts, in the integrity of which the virtue of religion consists. But, first, it ought to be considered that such impiety is prejudicial to the public, by the contagion of ill example. The reverence men have for God is the best foundation of obedience to temporal governors: this point enlarged on, with the ill consequences of taking away this reverence for God. But, secondly, it is want of the knowlege of human nature, which leads men to make this objection: for though it is true that the sinner who abstains from vice through fear of temporal punishment, cannot be said to act on a religious principle in so doing; yet we must consider the consequence which punishments produce. If you keep a sinner from vice at first through fear, he will by degrees habitually do well; his relish for vice will abate, and by length of practice

he will take pleasure in virtue. We see that this is the case with children. And will it be said, that when a man is grown to be habitually virtuous, he has no true religion in him, because he was reclaimed at first by temporal fears? If not, it must be allowed that these fears are not destructive of religion. Enough has been said to show, and also to justify the means necessary to be used in discharging the duty recommended in the text; it remains to exhort every one to do his part, and to make all, as far as he is able, *keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment.* And first, the magistrate is to be watchful over the manners of the people, and jealous for the honor of God. In this consists the stability of nations; for *righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the reproach of the people.* This case descends from the supreme head of justice to every officer of the kingdom, in proportion to his power. But leaving this part of the exhortation, it is to be added that private men, though vested with no public authority, can do much by showing themselves pleased that others should do their duty. Next to the magistrate, the chief care of virtue and religion lies on fathers and masters of families. The kingdom is one great family, which is made up of the small ones; in which if care be taken for the instruction of youth, the public will soon see and feel the happy effects of it: this point enlarged on, first, with respect to the duty which we owe to God, who, if they perish, will require their souls at our hands: secondly, with respect to our country, which is deeply concerned that its youth should be trained up to virtue and industry; else how can we hope to see the nation supplied with honest and worthy men? thirdly, with respect to our children, whom we have brought into the world, and whom we are obliged, by the strongest ties of natural affection, to guard against the certain miseries of this life and of the next: this point enlarged on. What strong obligations then are parents under to be diligent in the discharge of this duty! and what happy days might we promise ourselves, did the

performance answer to the obligations! In many cases ignorance and poverty preclude the performance; hence the institution of public schools, maintained by contributions for the instruction and education of the poor; calculated to promote nobler views than those of private interest to any one set of men, and tending directly to the public good. The passions of men considered, it is not to be expected that those who are permitted to go wild in their youth, should prove harmless, much less useful to society in after years. Necessity is a great temptation to wickedness; and when they have nothing but their corrupt affections to direct them, how can they withstand these temptations? Idle and undisciplined boys often prove vicious young men, and fall a sacrifice to the severity of the law before they become old ones. Thieves and robbers must be punished, or the innocent will be ruined: is it not then a reproach to a Christian country, that great care should be taken to punish crime, and little or none to prevent it? yet this is the case where the instruction of the poor is neglected. This mischief is in some measure provided for by the charity-schools; and thus the rich are saved from the violence of wicked necessitous men; the poor from wickedness and its punishments; and so many useful hands are gained to the public. But farther, the peace of the church is thus also provided for; an end which every sincere Christian must take pleasure in promoting: the consequent happiness obtained by such an education, must give us an idea of its usefulness, and encourage us in its support. If every gift thus bestowed shall have its reward, how abundantly shall the charity be recompensed which serves all these purposes at once! This point enlarged on: concluding exhortations.

DISCOURSE LXIII.

GENESIS, CHAP. XVIII.—VERSE 19.

For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring on Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

THE words of the text are the words of the Lord concerning Abraham, the father of the faithful; and they contain the reason why the Lord made choice of Abraham, to distinguish him from the rest of the world, to make of him 'a great and mighty nation,' a nation to whom should be 'committed the oracles of God.' 'Abraham,' says the Lord in the verse before the text, 'shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.'

It has been matter of great difficulty with curious inquirers to assign the reasons of God's particular regard to Abraham and his posterity, to whom he made himself known in a very particular manner; whilst the rest of the nations of the earth were permitted to continue in ignorance and superstition. I intend not to examine all the reasons that have, or may be assigned for this dispensation of providence; but since God himself has been pleased to give one reason for his particular regard to Abraham, it highly concerns us to consider it, as holding forth to us the very best instruction by what means we may render ourselves acceptable to God, and draw down a blessing on ourselves and our posterity: 'Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him: for I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment;

that the Lord may bring on Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.'

You see now the connexion of the text with the verse that goes before it, and the reason given for the distinguishing mercy bestowed on Abraham: God saw that Abraham would so rule and govern his children and his household, as to make them keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment; and therefore he determined to raise him into a 'great and mighty nation.' This reason is plainly founded on these two propositions, and supposes the truth of them, viz.—first, that it is the duty of every father and master of a family so to command his children and household that they shall keep the way of the Lord; and, secondly, that the same duty is incumbent on the governors and magistrates of all nations. If you suppose that the virtue commended in Abraham is proper only to fathers and masters of families, and has no relation to the duty of a public magistrate, the reason given in the text for making Abraham 'a great and mighty nation' is a very absurd one; for if the magistrate has nothing to do to command the observance of the ways of the Lord, Abraham's disposition so to govern and command could be no reason for making him the head of a great nation: nay, it would rather be a very good reason to keep all public authority out of his hands: for if the magistrate transgresses the limits of his authority, whenever he uses his authority for the preservation of religion, to raise a man to be the head of a nation because you foresee he will so use his authority, is to raise him to be a magistrate because you foresee he will transgress the limits of his commission. Since then God has declared that he raised Abraham to be a great nation, because he foresaw that he would command those under his authority to keep the way of the Lord, he has at the same time declared it to be the duty of every magistrate so to command and govern the nation, the great family committed to his care, that the ways of the Lord, that justice and judgment may be observed.

It has been matter of great dispute whether government is derived from the paternal authority, and is only the extension of it, or from the consent and choice of the people: a point of greater curiosity than use; since the rights of nations will be

determined by their respective laws and usages, and not by the speculations of philosophers. But as to the case of virtue and religion, it is evident that every magistrate's duty, with respect to his people, is the same with that which every father naturally has with respect to his children and household. Abraham was therefore to be made a great and mighty nation, because he would command his children and household to keep the way of the Lord: a manifest proof that the care and command which he exercised as father of the family was proper to be extended to whole nations; otherwise this care over his family could be no reason for extending his authority over a great and mighty nation. And indeed the magistrate's care with respect to the religion of his people, and the father's with respect to the religion of his family, are so much the same, that they must necessarily stand or fall together; for both have the same reasons to support them, and both are equally liable to the same objections. If the father of a family has his authority from God, and rules over not only his own children, but the servants and creatures of the Almighty, and ought therefore to have a concern for God and religion, is the case of the magistrate different? Are not his subjects also the creatures and servants of God? and is he not the minister and vicegerent of God, and therefore bound, in the first place, to have regard to his honor, who is the common master of him and of his servants? If the happiness of a family, and of every member of it, consists in a due conformity to the principles of virtue and reason, and it be therefore the father's duty, even out of natural affection to his children, to guard them against vice and immorality, is the happiness of a kingdom and the members of it less concerned in the virtue of the people? or ought a prince less to regard the welfare and prosperity of his people? Turn it which way you will, the arguments are still the same, and equally applicable to both cases.

If you object to the magistrate's authority in religion, that temporal rewards and punishments are improper to be employed in the cause of religion; are they not equally improper in the hands of a father as of a prince? If the subjects have reason to direct them, and ought therefore to be left to themselves in all matters of conscience; are not your sons and

your daughters reasonable creatures too? and have they not the same plea to make to exempt them from the authority of a father? If religion be something internal, and of which the magistrate cannot judge, because he knows not the heart of man; is a father better qualified to judge the heart of his son or daughter than the magistrate is to judge the hearts of his subjects? In every view the objections are equally frivolous, or equally strong in both cases.

From the text thus opened and explained, I shall take an occasion to inquire wherein the care of religion, as well public as private, doth consist; and to justify the means which are necessary to the support of it.

If we consider the nature and disposition of mankind, we shall easily perceive that two things are especially necessary to guard the practice of virtue and religion, instruction and correction: one, a proper remedy for the weakness of the understanding; the other, for the perverseness of the will. Where these two are joined together, where the same person has a right to instruct and correct, the instruction is properly authoritative; and this is the case both of parents and magistrates: and therefore Abraham's care for his family, which without doubt included instruction, is expressed by the word command; 'He will command his children and his household, that they shall keep the way of the Lord.' And the same precept, given by God to the children of Israel for the instruction of their posterity, and which is called 'teaching' their children in Deut. xi. 19. is, in ch. xxxii. ver. 46. called 'commanding' their children: 'And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words, which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe, to do all the words of this law.'

This duty princes cannot perform personally to all their people; and therefore there has been an order of men set apart to this work in every civilised nation in the world: and on the foot of natural religion, there is no question to be made but that the supreme power in every nation has a full right to appoint and constitute these public teachers and ministers of religion. The people of Rome had as good a title to choose priests as to choose consuls; and had their religion been right,

no fault could have been found in the constitution of their priesthood. But this right was under the law of Moses limited to one family; and the priesthood under the gospel is confined to such methods of conveyance as Christ and his Apostles have appointed or approved: and the Christian priesthood being in all Christian nations owned and established by the public, they have the commission and authority of the magistrate for the edification of the people.

The power of correction is proper to be preserved in the hand of the magistrate, and is never better applied than for the punishment of wickedness and vice, and for the maintenance of true religion and virtue.

As these methods are necessary for the promoting and preserving the virtue of nations, and establishing public happiness and tranquillity, which so much depend on it; so are they likewise for the good government and improvement of private families: and every father, by natural right, has power to instruct, and within proper restraints to use correction, for the good and benefit of those under his care.

As to instruction, considered separate from correction, he must be a great friend to libertinism who has any thing to object against it. Some have thought that, since God has given all men reason to direct them, all men should be left to their reason to discover the general truths of religion and morality, without having any principles or notions instilled into them by others; which they esteem as so many prejudices only. But not to insist how contrary this is to all the rules and precepts of Scripture relating to the duty of fathers and mothers, and to the practice of all nations, it is sufficient to observe that, had God intended that all men should be left to the discoveries of their own reason in matters of duties, it had been necessary for him to have supplied all men with leisure for speculation, as well as with reason: for experience shows that the generality of men, in the present state of things, are not able, for want of leisure and education, to be their own masters: so far from it, that in conjunction with all the helps that are at present afforded them, great numbers continue ignorant to a degree hardly to be imagined; and were these helps to be removed, we could expect

nothing in the room of them but the grossest ignorance and superstition.

If men have so much reason as to be able to discover their duty without assistance, as those who would deliver them from the bondage of instruction suppose them to have, it is certain they have reason enough to distinguish between truth and falsehood, when proposed to them by others, and are not therefore in any more danger of being betrayed, in acting contrary to their reason by instruction, than by being left to themselves: and as for those who have not reason enough to enable them to direct themselves, or to make them capable of receiving instructions from others, they are fit only to be governed by other methods.

It is very certain that general errors have been perpetuated by traditionary instruction, as well as general truths: but if for this reason an end must be put to all instruction, what one thing of use can be preserved in life, if we will be so fair as to carry the argument to its full extent? Many die daily by eating and drinking: what then? Must the world be starved, because you can tell us of some who have suffered by intemperance? or is there a greater reason to leave the world in ignorance, because some, through false teachers, have been miserably deceived?

But the strongest objections lie against the use of correction in matters of religion. All are so sensible of the necessity of punishments to preserve the peace and order of the world, and to protect the innocent against the violence of sinners, that the magistrate is allowed on all hands a right to punish all crimes which are prejudicial to the public, or to the interest of private men. A concession this not to be despised in behalf of religion; for our duty to God does so concur in all things with our duty to our neighbor, that he who punishes offences and injuries offered to men, will undoubtedly so far punish vice and immorality. And this concession being made, the plea for excluding the magistrate from matters of religion can only affect such cases where the honor of God alone is concerned; for all offences against men are allowed to be punished. There remain only then the offences against God to be exempted from the terrors of this world; such as profaneness, impiety, and the

like; on which they think there ought to be no restraint from the magistrate.

The great reason assigned for all this is, that punishments inflicted by the temporal power cannot make men religious; they can only constrain men to a compliance with the law in their outward behavior, but cannot reach to the purifying their hearts and consciences, in the clearness and integrity of which the virtue of religion does consist.

But it ought in the first place to be considered that such impiety is truly prejudicial to the public, as it tends, by the contagion of ill example, to corrupt the members of the commonwealth. The reverence men have for God, is the very best foundation of obedience to temporal governors: this makes them willing to discharge their duty faithfully to the public and to private men. Take away this reverence and regard for God, and few will see any reason to obey the laws of man any farther than is necessary to their own security. But what an alteration would it make in a government, were the subjects, instead of being willing to obey, to lay hold on all opportunities of offending with impunity? No vigilance of the magistrate could be sufficient to restrain the iniquity of multitudes inclined to do evil. Whoever therefore makes way for this corruption of manners, so prejudicial to the welfare and happiness of mankind, is liable to punishment even as an enemy to the state; and the concession made the magistrate to punish offences against the public, will intitle him to inflict vengeance on those who openly affront the majesty of God, either by denying his being, or his government of the world.

But, secondly, it is want of the knowlege of human nature which leads men to make this objection: for though it is very true that the sinner, who abstains from vice or immorality merely out of the fear of temporal punishment, cannot be said to act on a religious principle in so doing, or to render an acceptable service to God; yet we must consider not only the immediate influence which punishments have, but the consequence which they are naturally apt to produce. If you keep a sinner from vice through fear at first, it will by degrees grow habitual to him to do well; his relish for vice will abate, and by the length of practice he will come to take pleasure in virtue, how uneasy

soever it might sit on him at first; and whenever this change is effected, the man is truly religious: for what is a religious disposition, unless this, to take pleasure in doing well? This happy change often proceeds from less happy beginnings. We see in children every day, that their propensity to some vices is by degrees wholly removed by the watchful eye and hand of a good parent; and we may observe the same effect in men from like causes. And will you say that when a man is grown to be habitually virtuous, that he has no true religion in him, because he was at first reclaimed from vice by temporal fears? If not, you must allow that these fears are not destructive of religion.

But I have said enough to show, and also to justify the means necessary to be used in discharging the duty recommended in the text. And I shall apply myself, in what remains, to exhort every man to do his part, and to make all, as far as his influence reaches, 'keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment.'

The magistrate is, in the first place, concerned to be watchful over the manners of the people, and to be jealous for the honor of God. In this consists the stability of nations; for 'Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the reproach of the people.' This case descends from the supreme head of justice to every officer in the kingdom, in proportion to the power communicated to him; and every magistrate who connives at open impiety, is false both to God and the king. But I shall press this part of the exhortation no farther, which may perhaps concern but very few in this place. But give me leave to add under this head, that private men, who are vested with no part of the public authority, are capable of doing great service even by showing themselves pleased that others should do their duty. It is a great discouragement to magistrates when they have not only the violence of sinners to contend with, but also the resentments and indignation of the innocent. A consideration that ought to be maturely weighed, in an age that is not, I am sure, too good to stand in need of reformation.

Next to the magistrate, the chief care of virtue and religion lies on fathers and masters of families. The kingdom is one great family, and it is made up of the small ones; and if due

care be taken in private families for the government and instruction of youth, the public will soon see and feel the happy effects of it. Permit me therefore to remind all parents of the duty they owe to God, their country, and their children, to take care that those who are by the laws of God and man committed to their government, be virtuously educated and instructed in the way of the Lord. This God requires of you; his creatures they are, whom you call your children: they owe obedience to him in the first place, and it is his authority which you exercise over them; and if they perish for want of timely instruction and correction, he will require their souls at your hands.

Parents have a trust likewise reposed in them by their country. There is nothing of greater consequence to the public than that the youth of the nation should be trained up to virtue and industry; that the seeds of religion should be sown betimes in their hearts, and cherished by proper encouragement. These are the only methods from which we can have any hopes to see our country supplied with honest and worthy men. It is but reasonable to expect from parents that they should out of natural affection seek to promote the happiness of their children; and since the same care which is necessary to form them to be good subjects, is also necessary to lay the foundation of their own happiness and prosperity in the world, this care is wholly intrusted to parents; who ought to look on themselves as responsible to their country for the future behavior of their children.

But farther; if parents would but consider the condition of those children whom they have brought into the world, they would find themselves obliged, by the strongest ties of natural affection, to guard them against the certain miseries of this life and of the next, by seasoning their minds with principles of virtue and religion. How wretched, do you think, are those parents who live to see their children made miserable by vice? And what an addition must it be to their misfortune, if it is attended with this reflexion, that it was want of early care in them which led the way to this ruin and misery? How often is it that men remember with detestation the negligence and indulgence of their parents, when either they find themselves useless to the world and themselves, for want of that early care which

should have been bestowed on them; or exposed to misery, to an untimely end, or to a life of shame and reproach, by those evil inclinations which grew headstrong in them for want of being pruned in their tender years!

You see then what strong obligations parents are under to be diligent in the discharge of this duty; which they owe to God, their country, and their children: and we might promise ourselves happy days to come, were there a performance answerable to these obligations. In many cases indeed parents are disabled from discharging this duty through ignorance and poverty; and what must become of such families, where the fathers and mothers can scarcely, with all their labor, provide food and raiment; so far are they from being able to attend to the education and instruction of their children? And this necessity of many poor families among us gave rise to the institution of public schools, maintained by contributions for the instruction and education of the poor: an institution which, however serviceable to the poor of our country, is calculated to promote nobler views than those of private interest and advantage to any one set of men, and tends directly to the public good, and the benefit of all.

The passions of men considered, it is not to be expected that those who are permitted to go wild and untamed in their youth, should prove harmless, much less useful and beneficial to society, in their more advanced years. Necessity is a great temptation to wickedness, and leads men to use fraud or violence to support their vices; and if they have nothing but their corrupt affections to direct them, can it be hoped that they should withstand these temptations? Idle and undisciplined boys commonly prove loose and vicious young men, and often fall a sacrifice to the severity of the law before they become old ones. Thieves and robbers must be punished, or the innocent must be ruined; so far the rigor of the law is justified: but is it not a deplorable case, and to a Christian country a great reproach, that great care should be taken to punish wickedness, and little or none to prevent it? And yet this is the case where the instruction of the poor is neglected, and they are left to pursue the corrupt inclinations of nature to their own destruction. This mischief is in some measure provided for by

the charity-schools; and by breeding up the poor to be honest and diligent, the rich are saved from the violence of wicked necessitous men; the poor are rescued from wickedness, and the punishments due to it; and so many useful and beneficial hands are gained to the public.

Farther, not only the good order and peace of civil society is provided for by these charitable institutions, but also the peace of the church of Christ; by training up youth to be orderly and well behaved members of it: an end which every Christian, who has any regard for his holy profession, must take pleasure in promoting. But carry this consideration into its remoter consequences, the happiness to which many souls may arrive through the influence which a pious education may have on the whole course of their lives; and nothing will be wanting to give us a just conception of the usefulness of this design, or to encourage us to be liberal and generous in contributing to the support of it. If every gift bestowed for the honor of God, or for the good of our country, or for the sake of a poor brother, shall have its reward; how abundantly shall this charity be recompensed, which serves all these purposes at once; which brings maintenance to the poor, instruction to the ignorant, and opens to the miserable a way to happiness; which provides for the order of civil government, and the peace of Christ's church on earth; referring all to the glory and honor of him, who is Lord of the world which now is, and of that which is to come? Give therefore according as God has blessed you: here are many who ask your help; the poor, your country, the church of Christ, which intreats for these her helpless children: and one there is who looks on, and will not forget the love you show to the meanest of his members for his sake, Jesus Christ, our Lord: 'to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honor and glory henceforth and for evermore.' Amen.

OCCASIONAL DISCOURSES.

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE I.

PROVERBS, CHAP. XXIV.—VERSE 21.

THE fear of God and of the king are joined together in Scripture, to show the dependence which one has on the other. The advantage of religion to all public societies and civil governments is evident: and if we look into the history of former times, we shall find the first symptoms of ruin in the dissolute lives of the people and their contempt of sacred things.

The duty of fearing God is not considered farther than as the obedience due to our superiors on earth is included in it; the discourse therefore is confined to the following particulars: I. what obedience to our governors is enjoined by the law of God: II. how inconsistent with this obedience is the practice of those men, who *are given to change*.

I. Obedience is seen chiefly in three things: first, in submission to the laws and commands of our princes: secondly, in honor and reverence to their persons and government: thirdly, in defending them, when any danger threatens them or the public. First: to determine the original of civil power, or the prince's right to the subject's obedience, is neither easy nor necessary. When our Saviour appeared in the world, various were the forms of government in it, and different the

degrees of power exercised by its rulers; none of which were lessened or increased by the divine law, but all pronounced to be the ordinance of God; and obedience was exacted, under penalty of disobeying him, the original of all power: *for he that resisteth, resisteth the ordinance of God*, &c.

But since the nature of obedience is no where determined by the law of God, while the practice of it only is commanded, some other rule there must be to judge of the extent of our duty. This shown to be the *measure of power and authority:* whatever the prince can lawfully command in that, the subject is bound to obey. *The things which are God's must be rendered unto God;* and therefore no divine law can be superseded by the command of any earthly power: we must obey God rather than man, and be content with the lot of them who suffer for well-doing. But to reason abstractedly on the power of princes is a sign of weakness and of a troublesome temper: custom and the law of the land are, in each country, the highest reason: otherwise the gospel, which was intended for the law of all nations and people, could not have commanded obedience to the present powers, so different in form and authority.

Obedience is primarily due to God, the fountain of all power. Where God did not so visibly interest himself, as in the Jewish dispensation, but committed the reins of government to earthly princes, the making of laws for the external order of the world was remitted to their authority; and therefore the gospel, though infinitely more perfect than the law, gave us no system of laws, either for civil or ecclesiastical government. Of obedience there are two parts, the external and the internal: the former is that in the due performance of which the beauty and order of the world consists, and is therefore the proper care of its governors. The same holds in religion, which is the service of God: there are duties in which none are concerned but God and our own souls; such as faith, repentance, &c. But God requires also an external and visible worship from us, in which

order and decency are *required*, but not *determined;* and therefore they must be left to the jurisdiction of those to whom we are answerable for our outward behavior in all things.

The second instance of obedience is to honor and reverence our governors; a duty which we owe to all our superiors in proportion to their dignity and office. Next to him, whose very name cannot be taken in vain without guilt, are the supreme powers on earth, great though the distance be: to them we owe respect, according to the Apostle's rule, to *render honor to whom honor, fear to whom fear is due.* Two things have a right to honor and respect; personal virtue, and public character; which, when happily joined together, are to be accounted worthy of *double honor;* but when separate, are not to be defrauded of their due portion. Example of St. Paul, who corrected himself when he had spoken rudely to the high priest.

The third instance of obedience is in defending the persons and government of our princes. Mutual defence is the end of all government. Protection in life and fortune is the right of every subject; this he may lawfully expect from his prince, and so is bound to him, in the like duty of defending his person and government, whenever occasion requires it. When men entered into civil society, they resigned all their private rights and interests to the public good; and therefore the public happiness is to be preferred before our own: the prince bears the person of the commonwealth; by him the public lives and acts; therefore his life is sacred, and to be defended with zealous devotion. To maintain the established form of government is the first and highest duty of men acting in society: to remove the ancient landmarks of power and obedience tends to the ruin of all government, and is an injury to the prince and his vested rights, as well as disobedience to his power.

Second head considered: viz., how inconsistent with the

obedience required is the practice of those *who are given to change.*

No government was ever so perfectly formed at first, as to answer all occasions, the wisdom of man not reaching far enough to view all possible varieties of circumstances: therefore it is necessary for the public good that there should be a power lodged somewhere, to adapt old laws to present circumstances, or to those which may arise hereafter. To change thus is an act of lawful power, and therefore falls not within the charge of the text. But then the most necessary changes must be promoted and perfected by lawful authority, or else they lose their good quality; for no change can be so beneficial, as the usurpation of lawful authority is injurious: to seek public good by such means is like the curing of a distemper by destroying the patient.

To view with pleasure the factions and disturbances of a kingdom, having in prospect our own advantage, is the part neither of a good man nor of a good Christian; and to encourage seditious principles in others, though it may be done without danger, cannot be without guilt: such practices have nothing in them appertaining to honor or obedience to the prince.

The authority of the prince is as much concerned in maintaining the honor and order of God's service, as of his own; and the noblest character that belongs to princes, is that of *nursing fathers and mothers* to the church of Christ, the peace and order of which is at once the splendor and security of a government: therefore the advice of the text must be extended to the government of the church as well as of the state. And the occasion of this solemnity gives good reason for this application; the alterations intended and practised on the church having had no little influence in the barbarous treason which was perpetrated towards the state.

There must be in the church, as in the state, a power to change whatsoever by experience is found unfit for the end de-

signed; and to effect this is their duty in whose hands the power is lodged: nor can changes so effected ever be to the blemish or dishonor of the church. But when men dislike without reason, and obstinately condemn whatever has been settled by authority; when they disclaim all the power and the acts of the church; either their ignorance must be invincible, or their guilt unpardonable.

The reason of all changes ought to be very plain and apparent; since to change is the effect and sign of weakness; and to change *often* always breeds *contempt*. To press for alterations when most things in an establishment are owned to be good, and all tolerable, is not the effect of much judgment. If want of perfection be a reason to change, this reason will last for ever, since all the laws of the church are not of divine institution.

In matters of religious government, strange to say! every man thinks himself a competent judge of what is fit to be obeyed, though he pretends not to the same discretionary power in state affairs; as if the case were not the same in both instances; and as if obedience in all things lawful and honest were not of like necessity in both.

The common people are led to esteem men who act thus, because they appear to suffer for their opinions, forfeiting advantages and worldly interests by not complying with the establishment, while rewards are open to the obedience of others; and as long as men are weak enough to be misled, and the errors of some are profitable to others, there will be no end of dissensions; and should the restlessness of men once break in on the constitution, the event only could show where it would end.

To what extremes the humor of men once set on change will run, the mournful occasion of this day's solemnity is a sufficient proof. The actors in those troubles thought of nothing less, when they began, than the event that succeeded. The good

of the public and of the king was the pretence; and they never left off seeking it till they had ruined the public, and brought the royal head to the scaffold. With the same success the purity of the church was promoted; which ended in its utter subversion, and the blood of a great prelate.—Character of Archbishop Laud.—His case might deserve more to be lamented, did not that which followed bury all private injuries and resentments.—Character and death of King Charles I.—Reflexions thereon. It is a hard case if princes have no right to the allowances that are made to all besides: harder, because by their high station they are more exposed to the view of the world, and are obliged to live by the opinion of those who are not always wise enough to judge, or to let it alone. The privilege too, which extends to the lowest cottager, of choosing his own friends, is not without murmuring allowed to kings; nor may they stoop to the innocent and harmless enjoyments of life. Every step men take, by which they rise in the world, is an abridgment of their innocent liberty, and binds them to a stricter self-denial; for there is a natural envy in men, which loves to see the honor and dignity of high station qualified with trouble and anxiety.

Those however who are distinguished by the advantages of birth and education, should be above the common prejudices and sordid passions of the vulgar; thinking themselves obliged, both in honor and duty, to pay a steady obedience to the established government: this point enlarged on.

It is through the goodness of God to us, that after so many convulsions we still enjoy our ancient government; that there is still life and vigor in the religion and liberty of England; a goodness that on our part demands the utmost return of gratitude; which can in no way be so acceptably shown, as in the worthy use of the blessings we enjoy. Concluding observations.

DISCOURSE I.

Preached before the Queen at St. James's, Jan. 30, 1704, being the anniversary of the Martyrdom of King Charles the First.

PROVERBS, CHAP. XXIV.—VERSE 21.

My son, fear thou the Lord and the king; and meddle not with them that are given to change.

THE fear of God and of the king are joined together in Scripture, to show the dependence one has on the other. The only lasting foundation of civil obedience is the fear of God; and the truest interest of princes is to maintain the honor of religion, by which they secure their own. The advantage of religion to all public societies and civil governments is so plain and visible, that some have suspected it to be the only end of religion; which they allow to be an excellent contrivance of state, a proper remedy for the turbulent humors and passions of men; and though we acknowlege nobler and better ends of religion, which respect another world; yet we must, with thankfulness to its divine Author, own it to be excellently adapted to the temporal felicity of private men and public societies; 'Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the reproach of any people.'

If we look into the history of former times, we shall find the first symptoms of ruin and destruction have appeared in the dissolute lives of the people, and a general contempt of sacred things. Irreligion naturally tends to disorder and confusion; for all civil and moral duties are founded in the principles of religion; which once overthrown, nothing remains but pure

force and power to restrain the unruly appetites of men : a way of governing neither safe to the prince nor easy to the people, and therefore can never last long. Duties which flow from fixed and settled principles, must always be the same ; the obligation arising from them unalterable ; from the practice of which will follow order and regularity. But interest and passion are in continual motion, and liable to infinite changes ; and men who steer by them, can hold no steady course of action, but must be 'given to change,' as often as they are out of humor, or think the present state of things not proper to serve their turn. Therefore nothing but a religious sense of our duty to God and to our governors, his ministers on earth, can keep us constant and upright in our obedience. 'Fear God and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change.'

I shall not consider the duty of fearing God any farther than as the obedience due to our superiors on earth is included in it ; and shall therefore confine myself to the following particulars ; to consider,

First, what obedience to our governors is enjoined by the law of God.

Secondly, how inconsistent with this obedience the practice of those men is, who 'are given to change.'

First, what obedience to our governors is enjoined by the law of God.

Obedience is seen chiefly in three things :

1st, in submission to the laws and commands of our princes.

2dly, in honor and reverence to their persons and government.

3dly, in defending them, when any danger threatens them or the public.

The first and principal instance of obedience is submission to the laws and commands of our princes. To determine the original of civil power, or how the prince's right to the obedience of the subject first began, is neither easy nor at this time necessary. But whatever the original of government has been, or on what account soever lawful authority has been gained ; on the same, obedience becomes due. At the time our Saviour appeared in the world, various were the forms of government

in it, and different the degrees of power that were exercised by rulers over different countries; none of which were either lessened or increased by the divine law, but all pronounced to be the ordinance of God; and obedience to all exacted under the penalty of disobeying God, the original of all power and authority. 'For he that resisteth, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.'

But since the nature of obedience is no where determined by the law of God, but only the practice of it commanded; some other rule there must be to judge of the extent of our duty. As in moral virtues, the light of nature and right reason inform us what is temperance, sobriety, and the like; and therefore these virtues are commanded in Scripture, and in most cases men left to their natural notions of good and evil, to distinguish between the virtue and the vice; so likewise must the acts of obedience, which the law of God commands, be explained and defined by some other rule. When the Jews put that captious question to our Saviour, 'Whether it were lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar or no;' he gave no new directions, but judged them out of their own mouths by the known rules of government; for they having owned the coin of the country to bear Cæsar's image and superscription, a manifest token of 'their' subjection and 'his' sovereignty; he determined, 'Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's.' Agreeable to which is the Apostle's rule, 'Tribute to whom tribute is due.' Our Saviour took it not on him to determine the civil right of Cæsar; but the right appearing, obedience and compliance he commanded. The rights of princes are not determined in Scripture; and therefore in questions of right the Scripture is no rule.

The measure then of power and authority must be the rule of obedience; whatever the prince can lawfully command, the subject is bound to obey. The 'things which are God's must be rendered unto God;' and therefore no divine law, declared either by the clear light of nature or express revelation, can be superseded by the command of any earthly power. Which, whenever it is the case, we must obey God rather than man; and be content with the lot of them who suffer for well-doing.

To reason abstractedly on the power of princes is a sign of weakness, as well as of a troublesome temper. Custom and the law of the land in each country are in this case the highest reason; under which regulations the power of all princes is lawful and reasonable. Were it otherwise, the gospel, which was intended for the law of all nations and people, could not have commanded obedience to the present powers, which were in form and authority vastly different.

All obedience is primarily owing to God, the fountain of all power; and should it please him to take on himself the personal government of nations, as he did sometime of the people of the Jews, all other power would cease of course. In the Jewish government the laws of civil and ecclesiastical polity were divine; being established by God when he took on himself the external government of that people. But where God did not so visibly interest himself, but committed the reins of government to earthly princes; the making laws for the external and visible order of the world was remitted to their authority. And therefore the gospel, though infinitely more perfect than the law, gave us no system of laws, either for civil or ecclesiastical government; which under the law were ordained by God, (not as supreme Governor of the world, but as the immediate and visible Governor of the Jews;) but under the gospel are left to princes, who are appointed by God to be the visible governors of the world; and therefore all visible and external order is their proper care and business. Of 'obedience' there are two parts; the external and internal. The external consists in the outward conformity of our actions to the rules and principles of virtue; the internal, in the sincerity and purity of the heart. The government of the world is not concerned in the internal part; for if men act as if they were honest, the peace and outward order of the world will be secured, though their hearts are perverse; and therefore the judgment of this, God, as he alone is able for it, has reserved to himself. The external part of 'obedience' is that, in the due performance of which the beauty and order of the world consists; and therefore this is the proper care of the governors of the world. The same holds in religion, which is the service of God: there are duties which none are concerned in but God and our own souls;

such as faith, repentance, and the like; the virtue of which is internal, of the heart. But God requires likewise an external and visible worship from us, in which outward order and decency are 'required,' but not 'determined,' and therefore must be left to their jurisdiction, to whom we are answerable for our outward behavior in all things. How far mistaken then is the zeal of those who decline submitting to the orders of the church, because they are of human appointment! Whereas being ordained by a lawful power, they have so far the stamp of divine authority, as to make disobedience to them a sin against God.

The second instance of obedience is to honor and reverence our governors; to think with respect, and speak with decency of their persons and governments. This duty we owe to all our superiors, in proportion to their dignity and office.- If we look up to the fountain and original of all power, the supreme Governor of the world; his 'name,' even 'to mention in vain, shall not be held guiltless.' Next to him, though the distance be great, are the supreme powers on earth, to whom we owe the greatest 'civil' respect and reverence; according to the Apostle's rule, 'to render honor to whom honor, fear to whom fear' is due; whose names or persons to treat with contempt, is want of decency as well as duty. Two things have a right to honor and respect; personal virtues and public characters; which, when happily joined together, are to be accounted 'worthy of double honor:' but when separate, are not to be defrauded of their due portion. When St. Paul, provoked by the unjust usage of the high-priest, returned him a rude answer; being informed what place he held in the commonwealth, he corrected and excused his error; 'I wist not, brethren, that he was the high-priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.'

The third instance of obedience is in defending the persons and government of our princes.

Mutual defence is the end of all government. Protection in life and fortune is the right of every subject; which as he may lawfully expect from his prince, so is he bound to him in the like duty of defending his person and government whenever occasion requires. When men entered into civil society, they

resigned all their private right and interest, even in their own lives, to the public good; and therefore the public happiness is to be preferred before our own; the life of the public, which consists in maintaining the established form of government, to be supported, though with the loss of our own. The prince bears the person of the commonwealth; by him the public lives and acts; therefore is his life sacred; which but coldly to defend is want of affection to the public, and treason against the original laws of all government. And if the sense of honor be not mightily changed, to die for our prince or our country is to fall with glory, and challenges respect to our memory from all posterity.

To maintain the established form of government is the first and highest duty of men acting in society. To remove the ancient landmarks of power and obedience tends to the utter ruin and destruction of all government, and is an injury to the prince as well as disobedience to his power; who acquires a personal right and interest in the privileges descending with the crown. But this will more properly fall under the second head; which was to consider,

How inconsistent with obedience required, the practice of those men is 'who are given to change.'

No government was ever so perfectly formed at first as to answer all occasions; the wisdom of man not reaching far enough to view all the possible variety of circumstances that may require the mitigating or increasing the severity of old laws, or the making new. Therefore it is necessary for the public good that there should be a power lodged somewhere, to adapt old laws to the present circumstances, or those which may hereafter arise. Thus to change is an act of lawful power; and therefore falls not within the charge of the text, 'Not to meddle with them that are given to change.'

But then the most beneficial and necessary changes must be begun, promoted, and perfected by lawful authority; or else they lose their good quality, and like wholesome remedies unduly applied, prey on the vitals of the government. For no change can be so beneficial in its consequence, as usurping on lawful authority is destructive; and therefore it becomes a good subject to bear any inconvenience arising from the pre-

sent constitution, rather than, by too precipitately throwing it off, to prevent the regular methods of alteration. To pretend public good is common to all factions and parties; and therefore can excuse none: and where the pretence is real, yet to seek public good in opposition to public authority, is like curing distempers by destroying the patient.

To view with pleasure the factions and disturbances of a kingdom; and like the lame and impotent at the pool of Bethesda, to long for the troubling of the waters, that we may first step in and make some private advantage of the public calamities, is neither the part of a good man or a good Christian.

To encourage the seditious principles and practices of others; though cunning men may do it without danger, yet they can never do it without guilt.

These practices need not be brought near, to be compared with the duty of obedience. They appear at first sight to have nothing less in them than honor and reverence, or obedience to the prince.

The authority of the prince is as much concerned in maintaining the honor and order of God's service, as of his own: and the noblest character that belongs to princes, is that of 'nursing fathers and mothers' to the church of Christ; the peace and order of which is at once the splendor and security of a government; and therefore the advice of the text, 'Not to meddle with them who are given to change,' must be extended to the government of the church, as well as of the state. And the occasion of this solemnity gives but too much reason for this application; the alterations intended and practised on the church, influencing not a little in the barbarous treason which we this day lament.

There must in the church, as in the state, be a power to change whatever, through use and experience, appears unfit for the end it was designed. To propose and procure amendments to the laws of the church when there is occasion for it, is their duty in whose hands the power is lodged; and changes so effected can never be to the blemish or dishonor of the church. But when men dislike without reason, and obstinately condemn whatever has been settled by authority; when they

disclaim the power and all the acts of the church; either their ignorance must be invincible, or their guilt unpardonable.

The reason of all changes ought to be very plain and apparent; lest lightness and wantonness, in altering old laws, bring power and authority into contempt. To change is the effect and the sign of weakness; and therefore it is the character of the most perfect Being, that in him is no 'variableness, or shadow of turning.' 'Often' to change will 'always' breed contempt; and therefore, in private life, wise men choose rather to bear some inconveniences arising from the way they are settled in, than, by shifting from one course to another, to gain little but the character of unsteadiness and want of resolution. Much less should public bodies hazard their credit by unnecessary changes, and for the sake of removing one unpolished stone, endanger the whole building; which how it will settle on a new foundation the wisdom of man cannot foresee. Some inconveniences in the establishment of public societies, like some distempers in the body, are borne with less danger than they are cured.

To plead for alterations of seemingly greater purity and perfection, carries with it such an appearance of goodness and concern for the service of God, as will never fail to engage the favor of the multitude, who always make up in zeal what they want in knowlege; which is, and will be a temptation to men, who are incapable of a better, to take this way to raise themselves in the esteem of the people.

To press for alterations when most things in the present establishment are owned to be good, and all tolerable, is not the effect of much judgment. If want of perfection be a reason to change, it will be a reason for ever; for since all the laws of the church are not of divine institution, they have too great a mixture of weakness in their original ever to be perfect in themselves. And should all the changes desired be granted, let not men imagine that the next age will be so unlike this, as not to find fault with the orders of their superiors.

It is unaccountable in reason, that, in matters of religious government, every man thinks himself judge of what is decent and convenient, and what fit to be obeyed; whereas in matters of civil government, whatever they act, they dare not pre-

tend to the same discretionary power: as if the case were not the same in both; and obedience in all things lawful and honest, (farther than which no man's private judgment extends,) in both of like necessity.

How the common people are led into the esteem of men thus acting is not hard to say. To suffer for one's opinion, right or wrong, is in the eyes of the vulgar meritorious; and since some outward advantages are forfeited by not complying with the present establishment; should men, even for worldly interest, and want of merit sufficient to rise in the lawful and regular way, strike out new paths for themselves; yet they shall be sure, among the followers, to have the character of honest men, men suffering for conscience' sake. And though there be no suffering in the case; no punishment attending on such practices; yet whilst rewards are open to the obedience of others, the partiality of men will make them apter to repine at the distinction than to be thankful for the impunity.

As long as men are weak enough to be misled, and the errors of some are profitable to others; there will be no end of dissensions: and should the restlessness and importunity of men once break in on the constitution, the event could only show where it would end.

To what extremes the humor of men once set on changing will run, the mournful occasion of this day's meeting is too sensible a proof. The actors in the late troubles thought of nothing less, when they began, than the event that succeeded. The good of the public and of the king was the pretence; and they never left seeking it, till they had ruined the public, and laid his royal head low. With the same good success the purity of the church was promoted; which ended in utter subversion, and the blood of a great prelate.

Great indeed in many respects; but he sank under the iniquity of the times, by endeavoring to give life to the long-forgotten and neglected discipline of the church; when the liberty and licentiousness of the age could bear nothing less. The Reformation had given such a turn to weak heads, that had not weight enough to poise themselves between the extremes of popery and fanaticism, that every thing older than yesterday was looked on to be popish and antichristian: the meanest of

the people aspired to the priesthood, and were readier to frame new laws for the church than obey the old. This led him to some acts of great severity, that he might create an authority and reverence for the laws, when it should appear they had not quite lost their edge. Thus he became too generally hated, and fall he must; for his faults were great, and as the times went, unpardonable; he loved the church and the king.

His case might deserve more to be lamented, did not that which followed bury all private injuries and resentments; in respect of which, the former 'cruelties were tender mercies.' The thirst of blood was too great to be satisfied with the fall of private men; nor could the new schemes of confusion take place till the fountain of lawful power and authority was dried up. Every man had a project of his own for a new government; and rather than be disappointed, they resolved to lay the foundation in royal blood.

Could all the obligations of nature and religion have prevailed, the king might have lived to make his people happy; but the misfortune was, they had injured him too much to trust him even with his own life; nor could their consciences give them security for the mischiefs already done, but in going on still to add murder and parricide, and in destroying the power they had too much reason to fear. A barbarous cruelty! of which it is hard to say, whether the malice and wickedness with which it was acted were greater, or the patience and magnanimity with which it was borne. As if the contest had been, whether human nature were capable of greater degrees of virtue or vice.

View the king from the throne to the scaffold; and he was in his life the pattern of a good prince; in his death, of a good Christian. He was a prince who, from the sweetness of his temper, the integrity of his intentions, and a kind and tender concern for the meanest of his subjects, might well have expected to make his name dear to this nation, and his memory glorious, on a better account than the history of this day affords. He was formed by nature and grace to be an ornament of better times; and wanted nothing to make him great in the worst, those he lived in, but a just resentment of the indignities he suffered. The only prerogative his enemies had left him, was

to forgive the injuries they did him, which he exercised to the last; and in the heat of a merciless rebellion, could never forget his enemies were his subjects, when they had long since forgot him to be their king; which was too great a bias on the minds of indifferent men, when they saw the only way to escape being punished was to take the course that deserved it.

They who consider the happy and envied condition of our government, in which are equally secured the dignity of the prince and liberty of the subject; the blessing of a church established in primitive purity, wherein the honor of religion and God's service is maintained without superstition; obedience taught without blindness; can never sufficiently reverence the memory of a prince, who chose rather to lay down his crown and his life, than not deliver down these blessings inviolable to posterity. They who remember him without any partial affection, must allow him the character of a noble and generous prince, and father of his country. They who think with envy, and speak with malice of him, can say no worse, than 'he was a man of like passions with us.' And surely they forget themselves to be men, who would have our common infirmities remembered to his dishonor.

The case is hard, if princes have no right to the allowances made to all besides: harder, because by their high station they are more exposed to the view of the world; and few there are so modest as not to think themselves wise enough to judge of their actions. Private persons have their inclinations free from all checks and restraints, more than innocence and religion require: their rule is to preserve integrity, and it will preserve them. But men of character have this farther care, 'that their good be not evil spoken of:' a lesson of infinitely more difficulty and greater toil, by how much harder it is to please men than God. To seek the good opinion of the people is prudence in men of public characters; but is there a greater slavery under the sun, than to be obliged to live by the opinion of those who are neither wise enough to judge nor to let it alone?

The privilege that extends to the meanest cottage, to choose their own friends and companions, is not without murmuring allowed to kings: nor will it be permitted to the dignity of

some characters, and majesty of others, to stoop even to the innocent and harmless enjoyments of life: as if princes and great ministers had no private cares, but were capable of the constant thoughts of public business and religion. Every step men take by which they rise into the view of the world, is an abridgment of their innocent liberty, and binds them to a stricter and severer self-denial. For there is a natural envy in men, which loves to see the honor and dignity of great places qualified with trouble and anxiety.

But men who are distinguished by the advantages of birth and education, should be above the common prejudices and sordid passions of the vulgar; and think themselves obliged, in honor as well as duty, to pay a steady and regular obedience to the government. It is some excuse for the dishonor of the nation in the late rebellion, that we can show so brave a list of nobility and gentry who fell in defence of their king, and left the honor of their death, a nobler inheritance to their families than their lands and estates. The imitation of their virtue and obedience need not to be pressed in this audience; where the rules of duty and honor are better practised than they can be taught. The noble families have examples of their own, to instruct them how they should behave themselves to their prince and their country; and in the history of their ancestors, may learn that 'loyalty to the crown' is the first and the noblest title of honor. And surely thus much good we may expect from the evil of the late times; that men would learn at length to value the blessing of a good prince.

It is the goodness of God to us, that after so many convulsions we still enjoy our ancient government; that there is still life and vigor in the religion and liberty of England; a goodness that on our part requires the utmost returns of gratitude; which can no way be so acceptably shown as in the worthy use of the blessings we enjoy. We shall but ill perform the duty of this day, unless we amend in ourselves the errors we reprove in others. The crown and the virtues of the royal martyr are once more joined together; let not then our reproach be renewed by the repeated want of obedience and affection. If, whilst our governors watch with care and solicitude to make us easy and happy in ourselves, strong and

secure against our enemies abroad, we labor to disturb the methods of our government at home; we must thank ourselves for the evils, which will always follow from the turbulent humors and distracted counsels of a nation. We have an enemy strong and cunning to deal with; an ancient rival of the power and honor of England; an enemy to the religion of Protestants and the liberty of mankind: and if nothing else will, yet interest would prevail with us to unite for our mutual safety; and whilst our brave countrymen expose their lives to the hazard and fortune of war abroad, in defence of their prince and their country, methinks the least that can be expected of us is to be quiet and peaceable at home. To save the sinking liberties of Europe is worthy a queen of England; and if the spirit of our fathers be not degenerate in us, it will, it must rise to check the progress of an ambitious monarch; and it will ever be the choice of an Englishman, rather to die by his sword than live by his law: but our lives and fortunes are safe in the conduct and prudence of our governors; we need only sacrifice our ill humors to the peace and security of our country, and be content to 'stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.' Let us at least be willing to be saved; and for the sake and defence of our religion, submit to live by the rules of it. We have been long fighting and contending for our religion; it is now high time to practise it; and a better foundation we cannot lay than in the duties of the text, 'To fear the Lord, and the king, and not to meddle with them that are given to change.'

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE II.

MATTHEW, CHAP. X.—VERSES 41. 42.

TOWARDS the beginning of this chapter, we read that our Saviour sent forth his disciples to preach the kingdom of God. That they might preach with authority, he endowed them with the gifts of the Spirit; and that they might attend on their ministry without distraction, he eased them of the care of providing for themselves, by giving them power to demand and to receive of those whom they instructed whatever their wants required. It was not our Saviour's intention to make poverty a necessary qualification for their profession. This shown from Luke xxii. 35. compared with Matt. x. 9. 10. As the office of preaching the gospel was to be perpetual in the Christian church, so the right of maintenance was always to attend it: see 1 Cor. ix. 14. And since in this kind of charity the honor of Christ's name, and the promotion of his religion are immediately consulted, he has distinguished it by a more honorable and glorious reward: *He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward*, &c.

To receive a prophet sometimes signifies to receive his doctrine and become his follower; but in this place it cannot have this signification: reasons for this given. *To receive a prophet in the name of a prophet*, is to receive him because he is a prophet; that is, on account of his character and office, and the near relation which he bears to Christ: this topic enlarged on. In treating on the words of the text, two principal subjects are offered for consideration: I. the several degrees of charity

mentioned in it, and wherein the excellency of one above the other consists: II. how truly Christian and excellent in its kind that charity is, which is the end and design of this annual solemnity.

I. If we begin our account at the verse immediately preceding the text, we shall find four degrees of charity enumerated, and distinguished by distinct promises. The first is that of receiving an Apostle; the second is that of receiving a prophet; the third, that of receiving a righteous man; and the fourth, that of relieving the meanest of Christ's disciples. Charity is distinguished into these different kinds and degrees, by the dignity of the persons who are its objects: for since the receiving a prophet shall intitle us to a prophet's reward, and the receiving a righteous man to a righteous man's reward, it is plain that the former act as far exceeds the latter, as the dignity of the one object is above that of the other.

To receive a prophet because he is our friend or relation, is but a common degree of kindness: the honor must be paid him, *because he is a prophet:* the motive and principle of our action must be taken into account; and in this lies the difference between the Christian and the moral virtue: the same object appears not in the same light in both cases: this point enlarged on, showing that the love of Christ is the foundation of Christian charity; and that Christ in his members is the object of it.

Hence one kind of Christian charity will differ from another in perfection, as it more nearly approaches the person of Christ, who is the object, and as it more strongly partakes of the principle, which is the love of Christ: and by this rule of proportion our Saviour has placed the several degrees of charity mentioned in the text: the objects of that charity are of four sorts; Apostles, prophets, the righteous, and the little ones: they are ranked according to the dignity of their characters, which arises from the relation they bear to Christ, who is the head over all:

here then is a perfect scheme of Christian charity, and a rule to direct us in the choice of proper objects.

The Apostles, at the death of our Saviour, succeeded to the government and direction of the church: under them were placed teachers and pastors of different orders, comprehended under the general name of prophets. These offices have been perpetuated in the church by a constant succession of men duly called to them, and who stand in the same relation to Christ that the Apostles and prophets did, who went before them in the same work of the ministry; and we must *so account of them*, &c. 1 Cor. iv. 1.

The two next characters belong to the flock of Christ, who are not distinguished from one another by any difference in character or office, but only by their different attainments in faith: the righteous are the *strong* in faith; the little ones are the *weak*, who are indicated by St. Paul, Ephes. iv. 13. 14.

The learned Grotius shown to be wrong, who makes only three degrees, leaving out Apostles, and saying that there are *tres discipulorum Christi gradus*. His interpretation of the word δίκαιοι, as signifying a middle kind of Christian, and that of *prophet*, as signifying only a perfect one, disproved. Besides, our Saviour's design here was evidently to lay a foundation for the support of the Christian ministry; he forbids them to provide for themselves, because they were workmen worthy of their hire; and to encourage men cheerfully to discharge their duty towards them, he adds, *he that receiveth you receiveth me:* this being his design, could he forget all degrees of teachers except Apostles, and yet be so particular in reckoning up all degrees of Christians? This point enlarged on.

From this declaration made by our Saviour, we learn what ought to give the preference in Christian charity. The relation which men bear to Christ is the foundation of the love and honor due to them; and the nearer this relation is, the greater love and honor are due to it. It were easy to show the title which

these several degrees of charity have to their respective rewards: it is sufficient to instance the one which is most applicable to the present discourse, that of *receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet.*

This charity is intitled to a prophet's reward; and well it may; for it is a charity which does a prophet's duty: by enabling him to do the work of his calling, we share it with him, and preach the gospel by the mouth which we feed.

The work of the ministry is great, and requires our whole attendance; and if to this be added the constant care of supporting ourselves and families against encroaching poverty, who would be sufficient for these things? Must not the ignorant want instruction, and the afflicted comfort, whilst the prophet is employed in the meaner cares of the world? And must not such as set the Lord's prophets free from the world, and enable them to dedicate themselves to his service, be properly said to labor with them in the work of the gospel? And as they thus partake in the work, ought they not also to partake in the reward?

The properest way of exercising this charity is by allotting such a maintenance to the ministers of Christ, as may enable them to provide for themselves and those who depend on them. Next to its present wants and necessities, poverty has nothing more terrible in it than the fear of futurity; nor is there a more distressing case than that which arises from the prospect of intailing want and misery on those for whom we are bound by the dearest ties of nature to provide.

After a present maintenance therefore, the next degree of charity is to lighten this heavy burden; that the ministers of Christ may with cheerfulness, and without interruption, attend to the service of the altar, seeing a way open for the support of their indigent families, when they, their present support, shall be called away. And this leads to the second consideration proposed; viz.

How truly Christian and excellent in its kind that charity is, which is the end and design of this annual solemnity.

Its objects are the widows and orphans of those who have spent their lives in the service of the altar, and were found faithful. Considered in themselves, they are not the meanest of Christ's disciples; but to their own they add the prophet's claim to charity, who has left them nothing else to maintain them.

Were their poverty the effect of luxury or idleness, we might be ashamed to plead its cause in public: but its reasons are too well known; and it is so far from being a reproach, that in some measure it is a glory: this point enlarged on.

Some who subsist on the charity of this corporation are living witnesses of the faith and constancy of the English clergy to God and to their king: allusion made to the widows of the sequestered clergy.

Never does Christ more truly suffer in his members, than when his members suffer for him; nor can our acts of mercy ever more nearly approach him, than when we relieve those who endure affliction for his sake and that of the gospel.

The worldly advantages pointed out, which would have accrued to these children, if their parents had been turned to the more profitable employments of the world: hence arguments are deduced for the support of the charity.

DISCOURSE II.

Preached before the Sons of the Clergy at St. Paul's Cathedral, December 5, 1710.

MATTHEW, CHAP. X.—VERSES 41. 42.

He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

TOWARDS the beginning of this chapter we read that our Saviour sent forth his disciples to preach the kingdom of God. That they might preach with authority, he endowed them with power from above, and with the manifold gifts of the Spirit. That they might attend on their ministry without distraction, he eased them of the care of providing for themselves, and gave them power to demand and receive of those under their instruction whatever their wants required. 'Provide,' says he, 'neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves; for the workman is worthy of his meat:' verse 9. 10. Or as St. Luke expresses it, 'The laborer is worthy of his hire:' ch. x. 7. This reason shows the true sense of the precept; that it was not meant to take from them the necessaries and conveniences of life, or to make poverty a part of their profession; but only to discharge them of the care and solicitude of providing for themselves; for they had a right to be provided for by those whom they served in the gospel: 'For the laborer is worthy of his hire.'

And this farther appears to be the sense of this precept in Luke xxii. 35. 'And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.' Had it been his intent to make poverty a necessary qualification for the ministry, he would not have asked this question, or received this answer. But so little did he intend it, that his care supplied the wants of theirs throughout their journey, and enlarged the hearts of the people towards them: so that their poverty was turned into plenty; and they preached the gospel, without the incumbrance of worldly cares, 'as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.'

As the office of preaching the gospel was to be perpetual in the Christian church, so this right of maintenance was for ever to attend it; for the 'Lord ordained,' as St. Paul tell us, 'that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel:' 1 Cor. ix. 14. A right on one side infers a duty on the other: if the ministers of the gospel have a right to be provided for, it is the duty of the faithful to provide for them; but the proportion of this maintenance being no where determined, but men left to give as their circumstances enable them, and as their love and honor for the ministry incline them; what is given on this account comes to be considered as a charity freely offered, rather than as a debt duly discharged: and as such, our Saviour has promised to accept and reward it. And since in this kind of charity the honor of his name, and the promoting his religion, are most immediately consulted, he has distinguished it from all others by a more honorable and glorious reward: 'He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward:' &c. Matt. x. 41.

To 'receive a prophet' sometimes signifies to receive his doctrine, and to become his follower or disciple; but in this place it cannot signify so, for these two reasons:

First, our Saviour himself distinguishes this reception of a prophet from the other reception, which is obeying and hearkening to his voice, in the 14th verse: 'Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.' Had the same thing been intended by 'receiving' and 'hearing' a prophet, the words would have been thus connected: Whosoever shall

not receive you, 'and' hear your words; but the disjunctive particle 'nor' shows that they are here spoken of as different things. The 11th verse, compared with this 14th, will determine what is meant in this place by receiving a prophet: 'Into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence:' ver. 11. In the 14th it follows, 'Whosoever shall not receive,' &c. that is, to 'abide' with them; which abode implies, not only house-room, but a supply of such other necessaries as their circumstances required: for it was to answer the want of gold and silver, and such other things as they were expressly forbidden to provide for themselves.

The second reason may be collected from the last verse of the text: 'And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.' It is manifest that our Saviour here speaks of giving a 'cup of cold water only,' as the lowest degree of that virtue which he was then recommending; for to show how acceptable an offering it would be to God to receive a prophet in the name of a prophet, he adds, that even a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple should not lose its reward. To receive a prophet, therefore, and to give a cup of cold water to a disciple, are acts of the same kind, though differing in degree; and consequently to receive a prophet in this place, is not an act of faith or obedience, but of charity and beneficence.

'To receive a prophet in the name of a prophet,' is to receive him because he is a prophet; on account of his character and office, and near relation which he bears to Christ. To be kind to our friends and relations, and to administer relief to the extreme necessities and sufferings of our fellow-creatures, is, in some degree, to comply with the cravings of nature in ourselves, and to provide for our own ease and enjoyment: for the pity and compassion which miserable objects raise in us, are attended with a pain and uneasiness to ourselves, no otherwise to be allayed but by relieving the misery that caused them. But when we relieve the members of Christ, because of the relation they bear to him, we act then in the spirit of true Christian charity, and show ourselves to be lively parts of his

body; 'rejoicing with them that do rejoice,' and suffering with those who suffer.

The excellency of Christian charity is derived from this dignity of its object. In morality we can rise no higher than to consider men as men, as partakers of the same common nature with ourselves; and the natural sense we have of misery is the foundation of our tenderness and compassion towards others. In this case the regard we have for others is derived from ourselves; and our love and compassion bear a proportion to the relation that is between us and them: our children share as largely in our affections as they do in our blood: next to them our relations and friends have the preference: and in all cases the love of ourselves is the fountain from which our love to others is derived. But Christian charity flows from another spring: here all the affections terminate in Christ; and we know no other relation but that which is derived from him, who is 'head over the whole family.' And as the love of Christ is the source of Christian charity, so is it the measure of it too; and the rule by which we must adjust our love and charity to others: he is our nearest relation who is nearest related to Christ, and is therefore the most immediate object of our love and charity. 'He that receiveth you,' says our blessed Lord to his Apostles, 'receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.' Then follow immediately the words which I have now read to you for the subject of this discourse.

In treating on which, I beg leave to observe to you,

First, the several degrees of charity mentioned in them; and wherein the excellency of one above the other consists.

Secondly, how truly Christian and excellent in its kind that charity is, which is the end and design of this annual solemnity.

I. If we begin our account at the verse immediately preceding the text, we shall find four degrees of charity enumerated, and distinguished from each other by the several and distinct promises made to them. The first is, that of receiving an Apostle: 'He that receiveth you, receiveth me.' The second, that of receiving a prophet: 'He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward.' The third, that of receiving a righteous man: 'He

that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward.' The fourth, that of relieving the meanest of Christ's disciples: 'Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.'

Charity is distinguished into these different kinds and degrees, by the dignity of the persons who are the objects of it. For since receiving a prophet shall intitle us to a prophet's reward; and receiving a righteous man to a righteous man's reward; it is plain that receiving a prophet as far exceeds the charity of receiving a righteous man, as a prophet is more excellent than he.

To receive a prophet because he is our friend or relation, is but a common degree of kindness; the honor must be paid him because he is a prophet; it must be done in the name of a prophet: so that the motive and principle on which we act must be taken into the account; and our good deeds will receive their true and proper value, from the views and regards with which they are done.

In this lies the difference between the Christian and the moral virtue: the same object appears not in the same light to both. Nature melts at the sight of misery, and by a secret sympathy feels what it sees; and relieves itself by administering comfort and support to the afflicted: but grace looks on the sufferings of Christ in all his members; and gives that assistance to the miserable for his sake, which nature gives only for its own. For this reason we find Christ charging himself with all the kindnesses and acts of mercy shown to his brethren and disciples. 'I was an hungered,' says he, 'and ye gave ME meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave ME drink; I was a stranger, and ye took ME in; naked and ye clothed ME; I was sick, and ye visited ME; I was in prison, and ye came unto ME.' This regard to Christ is the very life and soul of Christian charity; and that only which can intitle our good works to reward at the last day: for our good works themselves have neither merit nor righteousness, but as they begin and end in Christ: the love of Christ is the fountain of Christian charity; and Christ in his members is the object of it.

This being the nature of Christian charity, it is plain that one kind will differ from another in perfection, as it more nearly approaches the person of Christ, who is the object, and as it more strongly partakes of the principle, which is the love of Christ. And by this rule of proportion, our Saviour has placed the several degrees of charity mentioned in the text; as will appear by considering the characters and relations of the persons who are the immediate objects.

The persons mentioned are four sorts: Apostles; prophets; the righteous; and the little ones. They are ranked according to the dignity of their characters, which arises from the relation they bear to Christ, who is head over all. And under one or other of these denominations may every Christian be found: so that we have here, in truth, a perfect scheme of Christian charity, and a rule to direct us in the choice of proper objects.

The Apostles, on the death of our Saviour, succeeded to the government and direction of the church: they were commissioned to feed and to rule the flock in his stead and in his name. Under them were placed teachers and pastors of different orders, who are comprehended under the general name of prophets.

These offices have been perpetuated in the church by a constant succession of men duly called to them; and the present governors and pastors of it stand in the same degree of nearness and relation to Christ that the Apostles and Prophets did who went before them in the same work of the ministry; and we must 'so account of them, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God:' 1 Cor. iv. 1.

The two next characters belong to the flock of Christ; who are not distinguished from each other by any difference in character or office, but only by their different attainments in faith; the righteous are the 'strong' in faith: the little ones are the 'weak.' The righteous are those who, as the Apostle to the Ephesians expresses it, 'are come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' The little ones are those he calls 'children;' unsettled in the faith, and liable 'to be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine:' Eph. iv. 13. 14.

The learned Grotius reckons here but three degrees, (for he

leaves out the Apostles, who yet are plainly mentioned in the 40th verse) and of them he says, that they are *tres discipulorum Christi gradus*. The righteous he makes to be a middle kind of Christian, between the little ones and the perfect; and by prophets he understands only perfect Christians, without regard to any peculiar office or character in the church belonging to them. But this is agreeable neither to the language of Scripture, nor to our Saviour's design in this place; the δίκαιοι, the 'righteous,' are always spoken of as perfect Christians: those who are to shine forth in the kingdom like the sun, are surely no mean or middle kind of Christians; but they are called the 'righteous.' So in the 25th of St. Matthew, those who at the last day shall be intitled to eternal life, are the 'righteous.' In the 12th of the Hebrews, the Apostle tells them they are come—'to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven; and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,' καὶ πνεύμασι δικαίων τετελειωμένων. Are the δίκαιοι, 'righteous,' here spoken of as middle Christians, where their distinguishing character is, that they are 'made perfect?'

Nor is the word 'prophet' ever used where Christians in general are spoken of; but it always denotes a peculiar character and office: 'He gave,' says St. Paul to the Ephesians, 'some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.' Where the offices are thus distinctly enumerated, prophet denotes a distinct order in the ministry; but when it is used generally, it denotes the pastors and teachers of the church, without regard to their distinct orders: and in the text prophets follow after apostles, in the same manner that little ones follow after the righteous: for as little ones include all degrees of Christians under the righteous, so prophets include all degrees of pastors under apostles.

Besides, our Saviour's design in this place was evidently to lay a foundation for the support of the Christian ministry; he forbids them to provide for themselves for this reason, because they were workmen worthy of their hire, and ought to be provided for by others: and to encourage men cheerfully to discharge this duty to them, he adds, 'He that receiveth you, receiveth me.' And when this was his design and intention,

could he forget all degrees of teachers but apostles, and yet be so particular in reckoning up all degrees of Christians? It was necessary to his purpose indeed, and to complete the comparison, to mention the several degrees of Christian charity, that it might appear how highly he valued, above all others, that which was to be the support of his ministry on earth; and therefore having shown the preference that was to be given to his ministers, according to the dignity of their office, he proceeds to show that others were but in a lower degree, and were to be regarded according to their personal attainments in faith and holiness; which was evidently giving the preference to his ministers on account of their office, before all others, how great soever their spiritual attainments might be. This was effectually to recommend them to the care of the faithful, by showing that, by providing for them here, they laid up for themselves hereafter the greatest riches: for 'he that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward.'

From this declaration, made by our Saviour, we learn what ought to give the preference in Christian charity. The relation which men bear to Christ is the foundation of the love and honor that are due to them; and the nearer the relation is, the greater love and honor are due to it. Of his disciples our Saviour said in the gospel, 'Behold my mother and my brethren:' no wonder then that he says to them here, 'He that receiveth you, receiveth me.' By this rule our kindness must descend from the greatest to the meanest of Christ's disciples; and when it rests there, 'it shall in no wise lose its reward.'

It were easy here to show the title that these several degrees of charity have to their respective rewards; but I should tire your patience, should I run through every kind; give me leave only to instance in one, and because it is most applicable to our present discourse, in that of 'receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet.'

This charity is intitled to a prophet's reward: and well it may; for it is a charity that does a prophet's duty: by enabling him to do the work of his calling, we share with him in it, and preach the gospel by the mouth which we feed. It is St. Austin's observation concerning St. Paul, that when he

held the garments of those who stoned the Martyr Stephen, he did *omnium manibus lapidare*;* the assistance he gave to all intitled him to the guilt of all; and made his hand to be in every blow that was struck: and certain it is that the assistance and encouragement we give men, either in the good or evil they do, will make us sharers with them in their merit or their guilt. The charge which St. Paul gives Timothy, to lay hands suddenly on no man, he supports with this reason, 'Neither be partaker of other men's sins; keep thyself pure.' For he would have been chargeable with the unworthiness of such as he should, without due trial, admit into the ministry. By the same rule, to bring men worthy of the office into the ministry, to support and encourage them in the discharge of their duty, is to partake with them in their ministry, and must be attended with the reward that is proper and peculiar to it.

The work of the ministry is great, and requires our whole attendance; it is the prophet's business to instruct the weak, to comfort the afflicted, to visit the sick, to rebuke sinners; and what time can be stolen from these necessary duties is but too little to be employed in searching the oracles of truth, that we may know the perfect will of God in all things; and if to this the trouble of the world must be added, and the constant care of supporting ourselves and families against encroaching poverty and want, who is sufficient for these things? Must not the ignorant want instruction, and the afflicted comfort, whilst the prophet is employed in the meaner cares of the world? And may not such then, who by their bounty and liberality set the prophets of the Lord free from the world, and in a manner consecrate them anew and intirely to his service, be properly said to labor with them in the work of the gospel? and as

* ——Quando lapidatus est Stephanus primus Martyr pro nomine Christi, evidentius aderat et Saulus; et sic aderat lapidantibus, ut non ei sufficeret si tantum suis manibus lapidaret. Ut enim esset in omnium lapidantium manibus, ipse omnium vestimenta servabat; magis sæviens omnes adjuvando, quam suis manibus lapidando.—*August. de S. Pauli Conversione.*

Inter lapidatores Sancti Stephani Martyris ibi erat iste durus, et forte cæteris durior, omnium lapidantium vestimenta servabat, ut omnium in manibus lapidaret.—*Item in Ps.* 147.

they partake in the work, ought they not likewise to partake in the reward?

The properest method of exercising this charity is by allotting such a maintenance for the ministers of Christ, as may enable them to provide for themselves and those who depend on them: and of this kind of charity the piety of our gracious Sovereign has given a noble instance; which will make her memory dear to all ages in the church of God, and will, we doubt not, be an addition to the crown of glory reserved for her in the heavens.

Next to its present wants and necessities, poverty has nothing more terrible in it than the fear of futurity; nor is life acquainted with a more anxious and distracting care than that which arises from the prospect of intailing poverty on those who are to come after us; and whom, by the strictest bonds of nature, we are obliged to provide for. After a present maintenance therefore, the next degree of charity is to lighten this heavy burden; that the ministers of Christ may with cheerfulness, and without interruption, attend the service of the altar; when they see a way open for the support of their indigent families, when they themselves, their only present support, shall be taken from them. And this carries me to the second thing I proposed to observe to you,

II. How truly Christian, and excellent in its kind, that charity is, which is the end and design of this annual solemnity.

The objects of this charity are the widows and orphans of those who spent their lives in the service of the altar, and were found faithful in the sight of God. Considered in themselves, they are not, I trust, the meanest of Christ's disciples: the example of their husbands and fathers; the pious instruction under which they have lived; the regular devotions to which they have been always accustomed; and their constant communion with the church; are sure pledges to us of their faith and holiness. But to their own they add the prophet's claim to your charity, who has left them nothing else to maintain them. The age and infirmities of the one, the youth and inexperience of the other; and the near relation they bear to Christ, by his servant now at rest with him; contain all the

motives and arguments that can be used to excite the charity of a Christian.

Were this poverty the effect of luxury or idleness, we might well be ashamed to plead its cause in public; but the reasons of it are too well known; and it is so far from being our reproach, that in some measure it is our glory: for notwithstanding the meanest of our parochial cures, and the discouragements of want and poverty, yet the service of God has not been neglected, nor his altar forsaken: and the numerous objects of charity that are to be found among the descendants of the English clergy, are an evidence on their behalf, that they 'fed the flock of God which was among them, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre sake, but of a ready mind.' And let no man grudge us this our boasting; that we can in this church show more laborers worthy of their hire, who, without gold or silver in their purses, or scrip for their journey, preach the gospel of Christ, than any other church in the Christian world can do.

Some who subsist on the charity of this corporation are living testimonies of the faith and constancy of the English clergy to God and to their king. I shall easily be understood to mean the widows of the sequestered clergy; who still labor under that poverty which their husbands willingly chose to submit to, rather than to sacrifice their faith and their allegiance to the wickedness of the age they lived in. And is this a disgraceful poverty to the ministers of the gospel, which so evidently 'bears the marks of the Lord Jesus.'

Never does Christ more truly suffer in his members than when his members suffer for him; nor can our acts of mercy ever more nearly approach him, than when we relieve those who endure afflictions for his and the gospel's sake. Here then, my brethren, 'is Christ Jesus evidently set forth before your eyes,' suffering 'among you;' suffering in these members, who inherit the poverty of his prophets; which 'they,' for his and the gospel's sake, embraced.

Had the parents of these children been turned to the more advantageous employments of the world; had they, with the substance which was spent in their education, and in fitting them for the ministry, bought any knowlege but the knowlege

of the gospel; it would have made an answerable return to them and their families; for every workman receives his hire, and a due recompense for his labor, except the poor ministers of Christ, who have this only for their comfort, that they are worthy of it.

It is this poverty of the prophet, which was the undeserved lot of his holy office, that now claims our charity: and have not the children a right to ask in the prophet's name, since it is the prophet's poverty that afflicts them? Is it not just that they should plead their father's relation to Christ, for a support under their present wants; since their father's relation to Christ has intailed these wants on them?

If therefore there be any arguments for pity in age and infirmities, oppressed with poverty; or if youth and innocence, exposed to want, have any charms to move compassion; if the poverty of the gospel has any right to a Christian's charity; or if the Christian priesthood has for its work's sake, and its near relation to Christ, any title to love or honor; behold, how all these motives unite to plead the cause that is now before you!

If the least charity bestowed on one of Christ's little ones shall draw down the blessings of heaven on us; if to receive a righteous man shall intitle us to a righteous man's reward; and if, by showing mercy to a prophet, we shall receive a prophet's reward; what rewards may we not expect to reap from this charity; where the little ones and the righteous are united into one object, by suffering under the same common calamity; and where both have the prophet's name and the prophet's poverty to plead?

To these motives what farther can we add, but only our prayers; that God would regard this poor family of his prophets, and raise them up friends for their comfort; that he would open the hearts of the people towards them for his servants the prophets' sake.

And may the charity bestowed on these poor orphans be ever had in remembrance before the Lord! May he whom their fathers served in the gospel, and with whom they now rest from their labors, be ever mindful of the kindness shown to his household of faith!

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE III.

LUKE, CHAP. IX.—VERSES 54. 55.

THE provocation which the disciples had to call fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, may be learned from Luke ix. 51—55. The hatred between the Jews and Samaritans, founded in religious controversy, was so great as to prevent all interchange of the common offices of humanity between them: see John iv. 9 and 20. This account is confirmed by Josephus, who also says that the animosity was occasioned by a contest concerning the holiness of their respective temples. St. Luke (ix. 51.) tells us that this journey of our Lord to Jerusalem was taken about the time of the Passover; which may account for the conduct of the Samaritans, who, perceiving that the disciples were going to celebrate the feast at Jerusalem, as the true place of worship, sent them away unassisted. The disciples, calling to mind the story of Elias, address our Lord in the expectation of witnessing his vengeance, and are answered in the words of the text: these circumstances enlarged on, as being applicable to the case in question. It was hatred arising from a religious controversy that bred the treason of this day: and to all concerned in it the words of our Lord in the text are applicable. The controversies between us and the Romish church are too numerous to be considered; but even supposing that church to have all the advantage which the parallel in the text can afford it, and ourselves to be obstinately mistaken in our religion, their cruel thirst after blood would still intitle them to the reproof of our Lord. Neither their zeal and love for Christ, nor their faith,

had they enough to work miracles, could justify their practice of cruelty towards their fellow-creatures. The same faith had the disciples in the text; and yet we learn that their spirit was not right within them. A consideration of Christ's judgment in this case will better enable us to judge of that kind of spirit to which the treason of this day may be ascribed. It is to be considered how far this reason of our Lord's excludes all use of temporal punishment in matters of religion; and, I. it will be shown that it holds in all cases with respect to church power: II. that the argument does not affect the civil magistrate's power, nor prevent his interposing in matters proper for his jurisdiction, however they may be pretended to be allied to religion: III. what is said will be applied to the present occasion.—I. The wrath of the disciples arose from two accounts. The objects of it were Samaritans and apostates, who had inhumanly treated them and their master. As Scripture forbids us to plead personal injuries to justify persecution, the weight of the argument lies on the honor of God and the difference of religion: this is answered by our Saviour, Luke ix. 56. It is shown that as the honor of God is best consulted by a compliance with his designs, and as our Lord has said that his design in coming into the world was not to destroy, but to save men's lives, we cannot offer a greater indignity to God than by making religion an instrument of destruction. This argument, which is that of Christ himself, reaches to all methods of propagating religion which are hurtful or injurious to men. As some punishments are calculated for the good of the offender, and consequently all will not come within this argument, it may still be pretended that there is room for the exercise of temporal punishments in the case of religion; since they might be made to forward the salvation of men. This reason can signify nothing in the present case, unless the church be vested with the power of dispensing temporal punishments: it cannot create a power; it can only direct the exercise of it where it is: those

therefore who urge the conveniency of temporal punishments in matters of religion are answered by our Lord in the text. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world, nor is it to be erected or supported by any worldly power: see Matt. xxvi. 52. and John xviii. 36. The meaning and extent of Christ's argument, and how contrary it is to the spirit of Christianity to found its faith in temporal punishments, thus shown. Since Christ's kingdom is not of this world, the powers belonging to his kingdom cannot be of this world. If we take all spiritual power from the church, and derive its authority from the magistrate or the people, we exempt the consciences of men from a spiritual jurisdiction, to submit them to a temporal one; and thereby we become advocates of popery. The power of the magistrate in matters of religion has been by some too much exalted, and by others too much depressed.—II. It is shown that the reason of the text does not prevent the civil magistrate from interposing with the sword in matters proper for its jurisdiction, however they may be pretended to be allied to religion. The principle on which the magistrate's power has been both unreasonably exalted and depressed is liberty of conscience; or rather on the one side a liberty *from* conscience, for which reason all spiritual matters are disregarded, and the magistrate's will set up as the supreme law of conscience; on the other side, the magistrate's power in all cases where conscience is concerned is taken away, and men are set at liberty to act as their consciences (however erroneously) direct them. The arguments drawn from the nature of Christ's kingdom against the use of temporal punishments are conclusive only as to the ministers of that kingdom, and cannot extend to the civil magistrate, whose business it is to consider men's actions with regard to public peace and order, and to punish such as disturb it, without respecting from what internal principle they flow. When men's religion or conscience come to show themselves in practice, they then fall under the cognizance of the

civil power; and if their principles are destructive of the civil government, they may be rooted out by the civil sword. On this principle many penal laws have been enacted in this kingdom against popery; not on the weak supposition that no man's conscience ever led him to be a papist, but on the known truth, that a papist must always be an enemy to the constitution of this government; which has therefore a right to secure itself against his practices by the terror of temporal punishment, notwithstanding the pleas of conscience and religion: and this argument may be applied to all sects professing principles destructive of the legal constitution. It is only when difference of opinion produces such acts as concern the public peace, that it comes under the jurisdiction of the magistrate. Penal laws are not laws of the church, but of the state, and are enacted to prevent the growth either of principles or practices conceived to be dangerous. The subject's conscience cannot bind the magistrate's power from acting in its proper sphere: a thief might pretend that his conscience persuaded him that the goods of Christians were in common; but this would not be a sufficient plea in a court of justice; and if so, it can be no general rule that conscience ought to be exempt from penal laws. The church has no right to impose penal laws on any account; nor has the state in matters purely of a religious nature: but if the controversy should breed convulsions that affect the civil government, it becomes the magistrate to drive conscience out of the state into its proper seat, the heart of man, whither his power neither can nor ought to pursue it. As on the one side the magistrate has no right to punish men for the errors of their conciences, so neither is it his duty, when he calls a man to account for his actions, to inquire whether those actions were suggested by his conscience; nor indeed could he arrive at the truth of these matters: but if the action tend to breed mischief in the state, the magistrate has a right to punish it without considering whether it be

a religious action or no. Disputes on this head would cease, if men would attend to the just consequences of their own principles; but they assert that, as the magistrate has nothing to do with conscience, he cannot punish men for acting according to their conscience; that is, his authority is suspended by the plea of conscience, in which case he must of necessity in the administration of justice enter into the examination of conscience. If the just consequences of the principle be attended to, the truth will be clear. As the magistrate has nothing to do with conscience, and has no right to punish the errors of it unless they affect the public good, so neither can the pleas of conscience supersede his authority in any case proper for his cognizance: this topic enlarged on and examples given. The limits of spiritual and civil power may be thus defined: the ministers of Christ not being of this world have no right to exercise power in it: the civil magistrate, as he is of this world, is not to be excluded from the affairs of it by any pretence of religion: pure religion cannot be injured by this, as it never interferes with the magistrate's right: those whose doctrines or practices are destructive of civil government, must answer to God for perverting religion, and to the magistrate for disturbing the public.—III. What has been said applied to the present occasion. The only two things which the church of Rome can insist on are determined against them by the text. For, firstly, whatever religious differences there are between us, their means of conversion are unjustifiable: and, secondly, notwithstanding their pleas of religion, the civil power has a right to punish their practices, and did justly exercise that right in the case of this day. The great cruelty of the Catholics in their attempt of this day enlarged on: the mercy of God in turning their malice from us on their own heads: the memory of the event deservedly distinguished in the British calendar, &c.

Nothing is to be more feared by an Englishman than the

prevailing power of popery: to design its advancement is to design the ruin of the state, and the destruction of the church. It is shown that no interest is to be served by fomenting jealousies between the people and their rulers; but that those who wish well to the succession will endeavor that there may be a mutual confidence and good opinion between the people and the princes of the blood, &c. A recommendation to men to enjoy the tranquillity of the reign, and to show their zeal for religion in dutiful behavior to their governors, and in mutual love and charity, rather than in disputes; to let the purity of their religion be expressed in the innocence of their lives, that at the restoration of peace they may exemplify the words of the Psalmist, when *mercy and truth shall meet together*, &c.: above all they are exhorted earnestly to pray for the good queen; and that when she shall be called to everlasting glory and a better crown, God in his mercy would tenderly regard these kingdoms, and hide them under the shelter of his wings till the danger be overpast.

DISCOURSE III.

Preached before the Lord Mayor at St. Paul's Cathedral, Nov. 5, 1712.

LUKE, CHAP. IX.—VERSES 54. 55.

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

WHAT provocation the disciples had to call fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, may be learned from the 51st and following verses: 'And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.' The hatred between the Jews and Samaritans was founded in a religious controversy; and had proceeded so far, that all offices of common humanity had ceased between them; insomuch that when our Saviour asked a woman of that country but for a little water to drink, she marvelled at it, and said, 'How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?' John iv. 9. The reason of her wonder is added in the next words; 'for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.'

From the 20th verse of the same chapter we may gather what the foundation of this quarrel was: 'Our fathers,' says the woman, 'worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.' This account is likewise confirmed by Josephus, who tells us that there were perpetual quarrels and animosities between the Jews and Samaritans, occasioned by a contest concerning the holiness of their temples; the one affirming the temple at Jerusalem to be holy, and that all Jews ought to send their offerings thither; the others affirming the same concerning the temple in Mount Gerizim.

It was about the time of the Passover that our Saviour took this journey to Jerusalem, as we may collect from what is said in the 51st verse: 'And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.' The time that our Saviour was received up, we know, was at the Jewish Passover; and this time being come when this journey was made, shows it to be about the time of the celebration of this feast. And this may account, together with what has been already said, for the unkind reception which the disciples met with in Samaria. The Samaritans finding them on a journey to Jerusalem about the time of the Passover, concluded that they were going to celebrate the feast there, and consequently were such as esteemed the temple of Jerusalem to be the true place of worship, and were despisers of the temple in the mount of Samaria. For this reason they refused to afford them any entertainment in their village, but sent them out to prosecute their journey without the necessary refreshments for it. This raised the indignation of the disciples: they immediately call to mind the story of Elias; it was in Samaria that Elias had destroyed the captains and their fifties with fire from heaven; the place itself prompted them to imitate the noble vengeance that had once before been executed there: they knew that a greater than Elias was there now, and had been more barbarously treated: why not then the like exemplary punishment? Why should not the fire of heaven come down to consume the enemies of God's own Son, as once it did to destroy the enemies of his prophet? Warm with these thoughts, and full of resentment for their Master's honor, they apply to him, 'Lord, wilt thou that we command

fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?' But he felt other resentments than theirs; and turned about, and calmly rebuked them, saying, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.'

I have been the larger in setting forth the circumstances of this story, because in so many instances they are applicable to our own case. It was hatred that grew out of a religious controversy, that bred the treason of this day; it was fire, though not from heaven, that was called for to decide the dispute: it was zeal for Christ, 'but not according to knowlege,' that prompted to the revenge: the revenge was bloody and unchristian; and to every one concerned in it does the voice of Christ reach, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.'

It would be endless on this occasion to run into the controversies that are between us and the church of Rome: the case we have this day to plead with them, wants not the support which the righteousness of our cause might afford it. Let them be the disciples: let us be the Samaritans; mistaken, nay, obstinately mistaken in our religion: let them have all the advantage that the parallel in the text can afford them: let them call us heretics, schismatics, aliens from the body and church of Christ: yet, after all, their furious rage and their cruel thirst after blood intitle them to the reproof of their Lord, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.'

Not all the boasted advantages of their church can justify them in the cruelty they use towards their fellow-creatures. Have they a zeal and love for Christ? So had the disciples. Are they provoked by the indignities offered to him? So were they. Have they faith enough among them to work miracles in his name; and will they from thence justify their practice? The same faith had the disciples; 'Wilt thou,' say they, 'that *we* command fire to come down from heaven?' You see their faith: they wanted nothing but the Lord's permission to do the thing: and yet, their faith notwithstanding, we learn from the unerring voice of truth that their spirit was not right within them.

But when we have considered our Saviour's judgment in this case, and how far it extends, we shall be better able to judge to what kind of spirit the dark contrivance of this day is to be ascribed.

The case has been already stated, and I need not repeat it: my business at present shall be to consider how far this reason of our Saviour's excludes all use of temporal punishments in matters of religion. And,

I. I shall briefly show that it holds in all cases with respect to church power.

II. That the argument does not affect the civil magistrate's power; nor tie up his hands from interposing with the civil sword in matters proper for his jurisdiction; however they may be pretended to be allied to religion.

III. I shall apply what is said to the present occasion.

I. As to the persons on whom the disciples would have executed vengeance, they were on two accounts the objects of their wrath. They were apostates from the true religion, and had erected a temple to themselves on the mount of Samaria. Besides this, they had very inhumanly treated them and their Master. The rule of charity is so very plain in Scripture, and the duty of forgiving injuries so express, that I think personal affronts and injuries can with no color be pleaded to justify persecution. And therefore the whole weight of the argument lies on the honor of God and religion; from which topics the doctrine of extirpating heretics fetches its main support. But to this argument our Saviour has furnished us with a short but full reply, ver. 56. 'The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.' The honor of God is best consulted by complying with the gracious designs of his providence; and the honor of religion best secured, by promoting the ends of it: and since our Saviour has told us that the design of his coming into the world, and the end of the religion he taught, was not to destroy, but to save men's lives; there can be no greater indignity offered to God, no greater contempt shown of Christ, or blemish cast on religion, than to make religion, which was designed to save men, the means and instrument of destroying them. The argument reaches to all methods of propagating religion which are hurtful or injurious to men, as well as merely destroying them by the fire or sword; for the 'Son of man' no more came to injure or abuse men, than he did to destroy them: and therefore the argument is equally strong against injuring or abusing our fellow-creatures in order

to propagate the faith, as it is against destroying them. And very strong it must be in both cases, since it is our Saviour's own argument.

It is true that all punishments do not come under the notion of injuries or abuses; since many are calculated for the benefit of offenders, to reclaim them to a better mind and better manners: and consequently all punishments will not come within this argument of our blessed Saviour; and therefore, notwithstanding what has been said, it may still be pretended that there is room for the exercise of temporal punishments (for of such only I speak at present) in the case of religion; since some punishments may be subservient to the end of religion, and may help to set forward the salvation of men.

But however good a reason this may be for exercising temporal punishments in the cause of religion, it can signify nothing in the present case, unless the church be vested with a power of dispensing temporal punishments: for this reason cannot create a power where it is not; it can only direct the exercise of it where it is. And therefore, to those who urge the conveniency of temporal punishments in matters of religion, we answer with our blessed Saviour, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.' The kingdom of Christ is not of this world; nor is it to be erected or supported by worldly power: he has not intrenched on the civil magistrate's authority, or granted any part of their commission to his disciples. When St. Peter drew the sword in his defence, he commanded him to put up the sword again into its place, with this threatening, 'For all they who take the sword, shall perish with the sword.' And in his answer to Pilate he declares, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence:' John xviii. 36.

This may serve to show the meaning and extent of our Saviour's argument; and how contrary it is to the genius and spirit of the Christian religion to found its faith in temporal punishments. The powers which are derived to the church from Christ the head of it, are purely spiritual: the punishments she inflicts are of the same nature; and the effect of them generally suspended till the offender comes to another world. It is just

reasoning, I think, to infer from the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, and the spiritual power of his ministers on earth, that temporal punishments are not proper to inforce the laws and edicts of Christ's kingdom; for since the kingdom is not of this world, the powers belonging to this kingdom cannot be of this world. But how those, who derive all church power and authority from the magistrate or the people, can on their own principles exclude temporal punishments in matters of religion, I cannot well conceive; for if the authority be of this world, the magistrate bears the sword to command obedience to his laws and edicts; and the exercise of the sword reaches as far as his authority goes; and therefore if the power of the church is founded in his authority, it must likewise be upheld by his sword: and consequently, those who are for throwing all spiritual power out of the church, and introducing into the room of it a power derived from the civil magistrate, must, to exempt the consciences of men from a spiritual jurisdiction, submit them to a temporal, and leave them to truckle to the power of the sword; which is in its consequence, whatever it may be in its principle, downright popery.

As the power of the magistrate is by some exalted, in matters of religion, beyond all proportion of reason; so by others it is as much depressed.

Let us therefore, in the second place, proceed to show that the reason of the text does not affect the civil magistrate's power, nor tie up his hands from interposing with the civil sword, in matters proper for its jurisdiction, however they may be pretended to be allied to religion.

The foundation or principle on which the magistrate's power has been both unreasonably exalted and depressed, is liberty of conscience. Though, to speak properly, on the one side a liberty from conscience seems to be the thing aimed at; for which reason all regard to spiritual matters is struck out, and the magistrate's will set up as the supreme law of conscience: on the other side a liberty for conscience to act as it pleases, is the thing contended for; and therefore the magistrate's power, in all cases where conscience is concerned, is taken away, and men set at liberty to act as their conscience, how erroneous soever, shall direct them without control. But it ought to be remem-

bered that the arguments drawn from the nature of religion, and of Christ's spiritual kingdom, against the use of temporal punishments, are conclusive only as to the ministers of that kingdom; and cannot extend to the civil magistrate; they, as they are ministers of a kingdom purely spiritual, can have no claim as such to any temporal power; and therefore they can exercise none: they consider men's actions with respect to the consequences of them in another world, and therefore they denounce the punishments of another world against offenders: 'Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.' But the civil magistrate has a temporal power; and the peace and order of this world are his care and concern: it is his proper business to consider the actions of men with regard to public peace and order, without respecting from what internal principle they flow. If the actions of men are such as tend to disturb the peace, or to destroy the frame of the government over which he presides, whether they proceed from conscience or not, he is not bound to consider; nor indeed can he: but it is his duty to punish and to restrain them. Whenever men's religion or conscience come to show themselves in practice, they fall under the cognizance of the civil power: or whenever they branch out into principles destructive of the civil government, they are then ripe for the civil sword, and may justly be rooted out. On these principles, I presume there have been many penal laws enacted against popery in this kingdom; not on the weak supposition that no man's conscience ever led him to be a papist, but on this known and experienced truth, that whenever a man's conscience leads him to be a papist, it leads him to be an enemy to the constitution of this government; and therefore the government has a right to secure itself against the practices of a professed enemy, by the terror of temporal punishments, notwithstanding the pleas of conscience and religion. And should any sect hereafter arise, entering into practices, or professing principles destructive of the legal constitution, the magistrate would have as good a right to unsheath the sword against them, as at present he has to do it against the papists: nor shall it avail them any more than these to say, they act on principles of religion or conscience.

As to mere difference in opinion, which ends only in specu-

lation, or influences only the internal acts of the mind, or produces only such external acts as no way concern the public peace, I see not how the magistrate can interest himself in them: but wherever difference of opinion is attended with consequences that may affect the state, how can it stand with reason or public good to exclude the magistrate's power in such cases?

Men often dispute against penal laws, under the notion of their being laws of the church, which of right they never can be; for the church has no right or authority to impose penal laws; they are strictly and properly speaking laws of the state; they have for their end, as all other civil laws have, the good of the state, and are enacted to prevent the growth either of principles or practices which are conceived to be dangerous: and I would fain know how the subject's conscience can bind the magistrate's power from acting in its proper sphere, which is to prevent all growing dangers to the state. There have been those in this kingdom, and there may be again, who found themselves persuaded in conscience that the goods of Christians were common. Should such a one come to share with you, as he would call it, in your goods, or as the law would term it, to rob you of them, would his conscience and his misunderstanding a few texts of Scripture relating to that matter, be a good and justifiable plea in a court of justice? If it would, I dare engage the sect will soon be numerous; if it would not, it can be no general rule that conscience ought to be exempt from penal laws.

The truth of the matter lies in a very narrow compass. The church has no right to impose penal laws on any account: in matters purely of a religious nature, the state has no right neither: but of such matters perhaps there may be great scarcity in the world; for the passions of men work themselves into their religious concerns, and the controversy grows insensibly into a struggle for power and superiority, and often breeds convulsions that shake the very constitution of the civil government. And must the magistrate sit still because the bustle is about religion, and be told that he has nothing to do in it? Surely it becomes him to stir and to drive conscience out of the

state to its proper seat, the heart of man; whither his power neither can nor ought to pursue it.

In this question of the magistrate's right, it matters not what a man's opinions are, or how well or how ill a man's conscience is informed: for thus much is certain, that the magistrate has no right to punish men for the mistakes in their judgment or the errors of their consciences. On the other side, when the magistrate calls a man to an account for his actions, I cannot see that it is so much as his duty to inquire whether the man took what he did to be a part of his religion, or whether he followed the dictates of his conscience or no. What can the civil magistrate have to do in such questions; or how can he arrive at any evidence concerning the truth of these matters? The nature of the action lies properly before him, considered in itself, and then in its consequences; and if it tend to mischief, to breed disturbance in the state, he has a right to punish it, without considering whether it be a religious action or no.

There would need no disputing in this case, if men would attend to the just consequences of their own principles. They lay it down for a maxim, that the magistrate has nothing to do with conscience, which is very true; but then they infer that the magistrate cannot punish men for acting according to their conscience; which is to say, that his authority is suspended by the plea of conscience: and if so, the magistrate, I think, will have more than enough to do with it; since the people's conscience will bind his power in the exercise of the sword, and he must of necessity in the administration of justice enter into the examination of conscience; for since that is to be his rule, he ought to know and to consider it.

But if you would attend to the natural and just consequences of the principle, the truth will stand in a clear light. The magistrate has nothing to do with conscience; and therefore on one hand he has no right to bring conscience to his bar, to punish the errors or mistakes of it; or to censure even the actions which proceed from it, unless they affect that which is his immediate care, the public good, or the private peace and property of his subjects: on the other hand, no one else can bring conscience before him, or by the pleas of it supersede his

authority in any case proper for his cognizance. For the magistrate might well say, The action is such as I am concerned to inquire into; conscience I have nothing to do with; it does not lie before me, and therefore I shall not attend to its pretences. Nor indeed is it possible that he should, since it is in every man's power in all cases to plead conscience; which is never more easily pretended to than by those who have none. A man under a criminal accusation might as well refer himself to what was done in the Mogul's country as to what passed at that time in his own unsearchable heart; and the magistrate might with much more reason admit the evidence in one case than in the other, where there is no possibility of knowing the truth.

It may be thought perhaps by some that I have been pleading all this while for the magistrate's right to persecute the subject on account of religion; and so I have, if there be any religion which indispensably obliges men to disturb the public peace, to pervert the ways of justice, to be injurious to their brethren, either in their life, or property, or good name; for these things certainly the magistrate ought to punish and correct. But if this be what all religions universally disclaim and abhor, there is no danger that any man should suffer merely for his religion, because the magistrate has a right to punish sedition and rebellion, and to do justice in cases of private injury and oppression. One may be mistaken in his notions of religion, and yet in his political capacity, as touching the laws of his country, he may be blameless; and as long as he continues so, his mistakes are out of the reach of the magistrate's power.

The reason of the case extends as well to doctrines as to practices: the magistrate has a right to suppress all such as are pernicious to the state. In Queen Elizabeth's time there were some who maintained, as a point of religion, the unlawfulness of women's government: should the doctrine be revived at this day, I imagine that the plea of religion would not atone for the malignancy of the opinion.

What has been said may serve to mark out to us the just limits of spiritual and civil power. The ministers of Christ are not of this world, and therefore they have no right to extend their Master's kingdom by the exercise of worldly or temporal

power. The civil magistrate is of this world, and the affairs of it are his proper care; from which he ought not to be excluded by any pretences or pleas of religion: nor will this bring any man under difficulty on the account of pure religion, which never interferes with the magistrate's right; but where men build on religious doctrines or practices destructive of civil government, they must answer to God for perverting religion, and to the magistrate for disturbing the public.

Lastly, it remains only that we apply what has been said to the occasion of this day. There are but two things which the church of Rome can insist on, both of which are determined against them by the doctrine of the text. For, first, whatever differences in religion there are between us, yet they are unjustifiable in the methods they use for our conversion. And, secondly, notwithstanding all their pleas of religion, the civil power has a right to punish their practices, and did justly exercise that right in bringing the contrivers and actors of the bloody tragedy of this day to an open and a shameful death. These are but the necessary consequences of what has been already discoursed, and therefore I shall not trouble you with enlarging on them.

How justly then may we expostulate with the church of Rome the cruelty of this day, in which they outdid even themselves! Deposing a king which they have often attempted, was not their work; enslaving the nobility, which is their common practice, was not their aim; they had prepared a richer sacrifice to the triple crown, and intended to expiate the offence of the nation against the pope, by the noblest blood which it ever produced.

Could they have buried our laws and our constitutions in one general ruin, they had then hopes of succeeding in their attempt. These 'children of the world are wise in their generation,' and rightly judge, that to confound the peace of the state and the purity of the church, is their only way to prevail against both; since nothing can make their dominion tolerable but anarchy and confusion; nothing their religion, but atheism and infidelity.

But God prevented their malice, and turned their mischief on their own heads. In memory of which blessing this day

was deservedly distinguished in the English calendar; which piety of our ancestors has descended on us their posterity in new blessings; and this day has been again consecrated by the deliverance of these kingdoms out of the hands of the same implacable enemies.

There is nothing an Englishman has more to fear than the prevailing power of popery; and so universally it is dreaded, that popery must ever be a millstone to the neck of any cause to which it is but so much as generally suspected to be allied; and this, I presume, has been well understood by those who have always been laboring to infuse the fears and jealousies of it into the minds of the people, and to clog the work of the government with the suspicions of it. If there be any aspersion which men should make a conscience of casting on their rulers, it is this, which contains whatever can be thought on to render a man odious. To design the advancement of popery is to design the ruin of the state and the destruction of the church; it is to sacrifice the nation to a double slavery, to prepare chains both for their bodies and their minds.

What interest is to be served by fomenting these jealousies, is, I think, hard to be understood: the protestant succession is established by the law, and what farther security can be had, must rise out of the affections of the people; which will not be increased by persuading them that they stand suspected in the opinion of those who may be one day their governors. Should these jealousies so far prevail (as we trust they cannot) as to render one great part of the people of England suspected to the princes abroad, what strength would the protestant succession gain by these means? Would not the consequence be, that this part of the people would begin to imagine their cause prejudged, and think with less pleasure on the security, which now they esteem as their great blessing? What may grow out of such mutual distrusts in length of time, should they once prevail, I cannot tell; but no good, I am sure. They who heartily wish well to the succession will endeavor that there may be a mutual confidence and good opinion between the people and the princes of the blood; that whenever the time comes, which must rob us of our dearest blessing, they may ascend the throne neither suspecting nor suspected,

but may be received with as much joy as the circumstances of that sad (and I hope far distant) day will admit of. Let the people be told how fully they inherit the virtues of their royal ancestors, that no distance of time or place can ever efface their love for our common country; but let none but theirs and their country's enemies insinuate that there is any cause for mutual fears and jealousies between them.

But whatever our fears are, let them be so far suspended at least, that we may enjoy the ease and tranquillity which the present auspicious reign affords. Let not all our zeal for our holy religion be spent in quarrelling and disputing about it; but some of it be shown in our dutiful behavior to our governors, in mutual love and charity. Let the purity of our religion be expressed in the innocence of our lives; that whenever God shall be pleased to deliver us from the scourge of war, we may be in such a disposition to receive the blessing, 'that mercy and truth may meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other.'

Above all, let us earnestly contend with God in prayer for mercies on our good Queen; that she may be long continued to us; that he would give peace in her time; that no demerit of ours may rob us of the invaluable blessings we enjoy in her; that whenever she, ripe for glory and immortality, shall be called to everlasting peace and a better crown, that then he would with a more especial eye of mercy and tenderness regard these orphan kingdoms, and hide them under the shelter of his wings, till the danger be overpast.

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE IV.

II SAMUEL, CHAP. XXIII.—VERSES 3. 4.

THE words of the text are said to be the last of David, uttered by *the Spirit of the Lord*, whose *word* was *in his tongue*. In whatever light they may be considered, they show the true art of governing, by which a prince may render himself and his people happy. The words shown to be applicable to the state of the nation; whence arise two considerations: I. the character of a good prince expressed in them: II. the great blessing which a just prince is to his people.—I. The nature of justice described, in the limited notion of the word, and in its more extended sense as measured by *the fear of God*; which makes princes to become true fathers of their people: this topic enlarged on. This view carried through the particulars of government; whence the happy influence of such a religious principle is discovered. Character of the queen delineated; and the principle just laid down applied to her executive government.—II. The great blessing which arises to his people from a just prince. It is shown, first, that good laws, duly executed, are as much the happiness of the people as they are the support of the crown: secondly, how the very example of such a ruler has a natural tendency to promote the peace and welfare of the kingdom; and how the virtue which shines from the throne, warms the hearts of all below it: lastly, that the blessing and protection of Heaven attend the government of a just prince; and that as kings are the immediate ministers of God, so are they his immediate care. The virtues of the queen

shown to deserve well this divine protection; and that if the state may rejoice in the care taken of it by its monarch, the church has an equal right to boast of her regard. Her excellent conduct considered, when the prospect of the church was dark and gloomy; when some who wore its honors, forsook its cause; when others silently lamented its condition, and the fears of popery surrounded it. Transition to the glories and triumphs of the queen's reign; her piety and compassion towards her conquered foes; and the noble end of her great victories in peace restored to harassed nations. Exhortation to her subjects to complete her happiness by uniting in love and mutual confidence, and by burying in oblivion those animosities which threaten the peace of our Israel. Allusion to the queen's sickness, and to the general grief which pervaded the nation on that account. Praise to God for dispelling those fears. Her desire of life arising from a love of her country: her concern for the good of posterity shown by providing for the future peace and happiness of these kingdoms, in the settlement of the crown on the ILLUSTRIOUS HOUSE OF HANOVER: a blessing for which the nation can never be sufficiently thankful. Concluding remarks.

DISCOURSE IV.

Preached before the House of Commons at St. Margaret's, Westminster, March 8, 1714, being the anniversary of Queen Anne's accession to the throne.

II SAMUEL, CHAP. XXIII.—VERSES 3. 4.

The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

THE words read to you are said to be the last of David, and uttered by 'the Spirit of the Lord,' whose 'word' was 'in his tongue.' They are by some Jewish interpreters referred to the days of the Messiah, as foretelling the righteousness and increase of his kingdom for evermore: but in this sense they can no otherwise relate to the Messiah than as they are pointed at him through David, who was a type of that great Prince of peace and of righteousness; and consequently, in their natural and literal sense, they regard the temporal government of David, and stand as a fit instruction for the princes of the earth.

There is likewise some doubt of the time when these words were first spoken; whether this admonition and promise were given David on his first entrance on his kingdom, as a sure direction to guide him through the difficulties of empire, and by him delivered as his last words, and the best legacy which he could bequeath, to those who were to succeed him in the throne of Israel; or whether they were first conceived and

uttered by David in the last scene of his life, and left with the authority of a dying father to his sons, as containing the true secret of governing happily; which he had learned both from long experience and from the influence of the Spirit of God. But in whichsoever of these views we consider the text, it comes to the same thing; and we have the true art of governing, by which a prince may render himself and his people happy, described to us by the wisdom of the divine Spirit, 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord.'

It is a happiness that we may justly glory in, that these words are a proper theme for this day, the subject of which is the accession of our prince to the throne. Such a description of the ruler's duty, produced on the like occasion, would in many places be esteemed a reproach to the prince; and could yield no fruit to the people, but a sense of their misfortune. Unhappy countries! where even such Scriptures have the sound of treason; but with us, the brighter light they are placed in, the more honor they reflect on the throne, the greater comfort and consolation on the people: for though the merit of good government be the prince's proper praise, yet the benefit of it is universal, and reaches even the meanest of his subjects.

The prosperity of a prince who rules in the fear of the Lord, is represented to us in the latter part of the text under very beautiful similitudes: 'He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds.' The sun is the great spirit of the world, in the light of which all things are made to rejoice; perpetual spring attends his course; all things revive at his approach, and put on a new face of youth and beauty: winter and frost lag behind him; nature grows deformed, and the world sickens at his departure. What the sun is to the world, the same is a good prince to his people: he is the life and soul of the public; his influence produces beauty, order, and regularity, and so animates every member, that the whole society is harmony and peace. This difference there is; the sun in his meridian glory strikes some parts with too fierce a fire, and the field fades under the heat which should refresh it: but the just prince, like the rising

sun in a clear morning, shines with kinder rays, and his justice, being always tempered with love and mercy, can never be destructive.

As this similitude sets before us the blessings derived from a just prince to his people, so does the next represent to us the stability of kingdoms so happily directed. That government is always in its youth and vigor that is under the management of a wise ruler; its inward constitution is healthful, and so confirmed in strength, that it stands secure from outward dangers: 'He shall be as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.' There cannot be a more lively image of a florishing condition than what is conveyed to us in these words. The grass which is forced by the heat of the sun, before the ground is well prepared by rains, is weak and languid, and of a faint complexion: but when 'clear shining' succeeds the gentle showers of spring, the field puts forth its best strength, and is more beautifully arrayed 'than even Solomon in all his glory.' Such is the splendor, such are the never-fading glories of a kingdom, whose prince ruleth in the fear of the Lord.

The text thus explained leads us to consider,

First, the character of a good prince, expressed in these words, 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.'

Secondly, how great a blessing a just prince is to his people; which is represented under the similitudes of the rising sun, and the florishing grass springing out of the earth.

First, then, we are to consider the character of a good prince expressed in these words: 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.'

Justice, in the limited notion of the word, as it signifies a due execution of the law, an equal distribution of rewards and punishments to the obedient and disobedient, makes but a part of the description of a good governor; that which fills up the character is a more extensive virtue, influencing the whole conduct of a reign, and denotes rather the general habit of virtue than any particular acts that flow from it. What this virtue is may best be understood by comparing it with that which is the true measure of it, the fear of the Lord. And thus the text has taught us to explain the notion, referring us evidently

to the fear of the Lord, as to the proper rule and measure of that justice which it requires in a ruler: 'He that ruleth over men must be just;' what is meant by just, the following words inform us: 'Ruling in the fear of God.'

The fear of God is in all cases the beginning of wisdom, as being the true foundation of religion; the principle from which the knowlege of our duty, as well as our obligation to obedience, is in all instances deducible. It is a principle which extends to all the stations and circumstances of human life; and will teach the prince as well how to govern, as the subject how to obey.

Now the fear of the Lord either means a just sense of the attributes of God, or else necessarily supposes it; for fear always follows what is determined by the conception we form of the thing or person feared. If we join to great power great malice, and a settled resolution to do mischief, the object so clothed strikes with terror and confusion, and the result is an abject slavish fear: if we add to unlimited power as great goodness and benovolence, such a being creates in our minds awe and reverence, and replenishes our hearts with filial fear and veneration. To know the difference between the fear of a father and of a tyrant, we must necessarily consult our ideas of both, by which only we can distinguish the passions. To act therefore under the fear of God, is one and the same thing as to be influenced by a just sense of his power, holiness, and other divine perfections; and to 'rule' in the fear of the Lord, is so to 'govern,' as being always under the sense of his power and holiness, as being ever in the presence of him who is King of kings, and Lord of lords.

It is this sense which will make princes become true fathers of their people: for when they consider that they stand in the place of God, the common father of mankind; that those who are made subject to their power, are the sons of him who put the reins of government into their hands; they must needs treat their people like their children, as conscious to themselves of executing a father's power; and knowing that they should be injurious to him above them, as well as to those below them, should they use his authority in a way not suitable to his character. Could a prince abuse his authority to the gratifying

his lust or passion, had he this sense before his eyes? Could he think it reasonable to make the power of God execute the corrupt designs of a man's heart? In the private affairs of life there is nothing leaves a fouler stain on a good character than the abuse of a trust, which extends perhaps only to the guardianship of a few infants and a small estate; and yet a man that proves unjust to his friend in so small a concern, in neglecting the interest of the little family committed to his care, is looked on by all as abandoned to the sense of honor and virtue. The reason of this resentment is plain; because every body sees that the father left his friend his power and authority over the family and estate, that he might become a father to them in his stead: and this is understood to carry with it such an obligation, that an honest man is more careful and industrious in the concerns of others, than ofttimes he is in his own. A good prince governs with the same sentiments, which are ever suggested to him by the fear of God: he considers his people as the family of the Almighty, over which he is placed by the appointment of Providence; as orphans committed to his care, whose prosperity and happiness depend intirely on his conduct: the will of God is always the rule by which he uses the power of God; and in every instance of government he does the very thing which he judges God would do, were he personally to determine the case himself; for a prince so instructed seeks not 'his own will, but the will of him who sent him.'

This is a general account of the prince's temper and disposition, who rules in the fear of the Lord. If we carry the view through the particulars of government, we shall discover more distinctly the happy influence of this religious principle.

The royal authority being the immediate power of God, has no more immediate concern than to promote the service and to establish the honor of God in the hearts of men; it is but a natural tribute for princes to pay their Maker, to provide that those whom God has made to be their subjects, should not cease to be his servants. Besides, this is a case recommended to them both by their own and their people's interest: it is not in the power of the best princes to make all their subjects equally happy; poverty and distress will be the uncomfortable companions of some in the most florishing kingdoms: but reli-

gion is a way open to happiness, to which the rich and the poor have equally admittance; it is that only which can make all circumstances of life easy, and is necessary as well to teach us 'how to abound,' as how to 'suffer need:' for this reason then, a prince concerned for the happiness of his people cannot be unconcerned for the interest of religion. But, farther; the welfare and prosperity of civil societies, as such, depend on the influence which religion has on the minds and manners of the people: human laws are often transgressed with impunity, often easily evaded; and sometimes, for want of due execution, they lose their force and vigor; but the law never dies in a heart seasoned with religion, and conscious to itself that it owes obedience to the ruler, not only 'for wrath, but for conscience' sake.' Faction sometimes grows too strong for lawful power; and who then shall refrain the madness of the people, who already think themselves superior to their prince, and know none higher than he to be afraid of? Religion only can subdue the wild passions of men, and make the ruler secure against their attempts; so that in this sense it may be truly said that the throne shall endure for ever, which is established in righteousness.

These advantages can never be wanting under the conduct of a prince who governs in the fear of the Lord: the sense of his own duty, and his regard for the honor of God, will incline him in all cases to promote and encourage the service of his Maker; and to fill up that character, which, when justly sustained, is both the ornament and strength of the crown, 'defender of the faith.' To such princes the church of God owes her temporal prosperity, her liberal maintenance, and in great measure even the purity of her religion: to such she owes the temples of God, which are in every nation the truest indications of royal piety and magnificence: to such princes—but whither am I going? Methinks my country chides me whilst I deal to such princes in common those praises which seem to be the distinguishing marks, the excellencies peculiar to our own. Happy Britain! that canst so easily discover the features of thine own prince, whenever the image of a good one is set before thee! Religion indeed is so much both the practice and the care of our good queen, that in this respect her enemies

(if such a princess can have enemies) must confess that the world has seldom seen her equal, never her superior. In the midst of outward pomp and glory, how constant, how regular is her devotion! how just and becoming her behavior in the presence of God, that even those who attend at the altar may profit by the example! With how tender an eye of compassion did she regard the poverty and distress of the Christian priesthood; and how did she consult the honor of God and religion, providing by her royal bounty that the altar should be attended, not by the servants of men waiting for bread, but by the freemen of the Lord! Ages to come shall give glory to God for her, when they shall behold those monuments of her piety, which are now but just rising from their foundations; a glory that will not be the less hers, though we acknowlege (as in justice and gratitude we always must) how readily her faithful Commons enabled her to support the charge of so expensive an undertaking.

This prospect is so pleasant, that here I could delight to dwell; but the time, which spends much faster than my subject, bids me proceed.

Let us then take a transient view of the happy effects of this religious principle, the fear of God, in the political government of a just prince.

Human nature is much the same in all parts of the world; there are the same passions and inclinations to be found in men of different countries; and therefore it is in vain to search nature, to find the causes why some nations enjoy inward peace and tranquillity, whilst others are exposed to misery and confusion. The difference seems to lie in these two points; the laws and constitutions of several countries, and the execution of those laws. Princes who can forget the character of their Master, whose power they exercise, may easily forget the character of their subjects, over whose persons they reign; and though 'he that ruleth over men' ought to be just, because men are rational creatures, and have a right to be governed by the laws of reason and justice; yet it is no wonder that the ruler who does not 'fear God,' should not 'regard men.' Power and greatness are in themselves great temptations, mighty corrupters of the heart of man; and unless there be the

fear of God to restrain those evil effects of worldly grandeur, it must happen that he that has the most power will be least able to use it well; and consequently want of religion in the prince must always end in the slavery and misery of the people. But when a ruler acts under the sense of God's supreme dominion, and knows that there is no proper legislative power but that of the Almighty; that the part intrusted to him is a ray issuing from the divine fountain; he will so use his power as not to disgrace the giver of it, and exert it in laws and constitutions worthy of the great original from whence they flow: such laws must always be honor to the throne, safety and prosperity to the people.

With us the legislative power is more happily administered than in any known part of the world; and I may have leave in this august assembly to congratulate with my country that she lives under no law that is not of her own choosing: a privilege which is the glory of Britain, purchased with the blood of our ancestors, and ought never to be parted with but together with our own. But how is this happiness completed, when we have a princess on the throne, as ready to give life to any law for the public good as her people can be to ask it; who takes no other pleasure in her power but in making it beneficial to her country; and then only thinks she reigns when she can do good to mankind!

Wholesome laws, whatever tendency they have to public good, have no effect but as they are prudently administered and vigorously executed; the welfare therefore of kingdoms does in great measure depend on the steady and wise exercise of the executive power: for though the touch of the sceptre may animate the law and give it being, yet it is this power which gives it energy and operation, and teaches it how to influence the lives and manners of the people; how to make them at once good and happy. In the management of a corrupt ruler, it is oftentimes made a snare to the lives and fortunes of the best subjects; but where the fear of God directs the prince, the law is always a protection to the innocent, a terror to the wicked. In all human laws there is an imperfection, which would often make justice degenerate into cruelty, were not the rigor of the letter left subject to be moderated

by the reason and equity of the governor; for it being impossible to form a rule that shall regard all the various circumstances that attend human actions, the law can in many cases consider one action but in one light, and annexes the same punishment to the same crime, wherever found, not considering, what it cannot foresee, the aggravations or alleviations which may arise from the circumstances of offenders: and yet in the eye of reason and equity there is no truer maxim than this, *duo cum faciunt idem, non est idem;* from whence it comes to pass that oftentimes the material action and the moral action, that is, the action considered in all its circumstances, are in one and the same instance of different kinds; in which case the letter of the law may find a crime, where reason and equity can find no criminal; or at least not one deserving to suffer the severity of the law. This is the proper field for the exercise of royal mercy; for arbitrary mercy, that does not regard the offender's merit, is rather humor than goodness, and is destructive of the constitution; whereas true mercy always supplies the defects of it: for the mercy of the prince is not opposed to the cruelty of the law, (for the law has no intention to be cruel,) but it comes in to relieve the law against the imperfections to which all human constitutions are subject. Justice herself is blind, and wants the royal touch, which gives her the eyes of mercy to distinguish between the crimes of malice and inadvertency.

From this view of the executive power, it is easy to judge how great the difference is between a prince who rules in the fear of the Lord, and one who has not God in all his thoughts. Even mercy, the choicest flower of the crown, and which has the kindest aspect on the subject, may in an ill hand become oppressive to the people; and so it always does when it is used to countenance or protect the wicked against justice; and to set those who do not love the law above the fear of it: but when the sword of justice is sent forth, not to execute the will of man, or serve his passions, but to purge the land from iniquity, and to root out oppression from the earth; when mercy follows close behind, to screen the ignorant, the inadvertent, the unfortunate offenders, who sinned not out of malicious wickedness, from the rigorous blows of justice; then may it

properly be said that 'mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.'

I should injure the character of our excellent queen, should I seem to labor in the application of these praises to her, which are so much her own, that I doubt not but every one here has been beforehand with me in blessing God for these rare endowments of his princess. Some reigns, however full of glory, yet give us a secret horror when we see our annals stained with the richest blood of the three kingdoms; when we see the sword always naked, but cannot discern the hand that guides it, and are left doubtful whether it strikes the blows of justice or resentment. But posterity shall find no such pain in reading the history of these times, which will appear as one continued scene of glory and happiness, and shine like the 'morning light when the sun riseth, even like the morning that has no clouds.' And this leads me, in the second place, to consider,

II. How great a blessing a just prince is to his people; which is represented in the text under the similitudes of the rising sun, and the florishing grass springing out of the earth.

Good laws duly executed are as much the happiness of the people as they are the support of the crown; without them liberty would be our ruin, and instead of enjoying our freedom, we should perish in our licentiousness; for liberty does not consist in being free from all restraints; if it did, the wild inhabitants on the coast of Africa might more justly boast of their liberty than we do. Civil liberty is the child of the law, and thrives best under the guardianship of its parents; and therefore a just prince, as he will most regard the law, will always be the best patron of his people's liberty: such a prince has no separate interest from his country; he looks on himself as the head of the body; and if any member grieves, he suffers with it: he can never cast an envious eye on the privileges of his people, which he esteems as his own, and values even as the jewels of his crown. How happy are the people who are in such a case! how blessed is the nation whose prince 'feareth God!'

For, farther, the very example of such a ruler has a natural tendency to promote the peace and welfare of the kingdom.

When virtue shines from the throne, it warms the hearts of all below it, and the advantage of the station gives it an influence not to be resisted; religion in the height of greatness is an amiable sight, and the people will insensibly learn to imitate what they cannot help admiring. Would it not teach the haughtiest mind humility, to see majesty itself lie prostrate at the altar, imploring the divine assistance with such a sense of its dependence as is but rarely found in the lowest fortune? Must it not shame us into mutual kindness and benevolence, when we see with how uncommon a love the princess embraces all her subjects, even the worst deserving; imitating the example of divine mercy, which makes the 'sun to rise both on the just and on the unjust?' Can the people refuse submission to such a prince? Can they scruple to follow the law as the rule of their obedience, which they see their princess submitting to as the rule of her government.

Lastly, there is one thing more which comprehends in it all that a nation can wish for, and which always attends the government of a just prince; I mean the blessing and protection of Heaven. As kings are the immediate ministers of God, so are they his immediate care; he ruleth both their hearts and their hands, and turneth them as seemeth best to his wisdom. It is easy for him to punish the wickedness of a prince and his people, by making foolish the wisdom of their wise men, and only suffering them to choose their own destruction; it is as easy to reward the good, by establishing the heart of the prince in council and in wisdom, and guiding him insensibly into the road of honor and prosperity. Time would fail me to set before you the instances of God's judgments and mercies. Those of the former sort (blessed be his name!) have no relation to this day; and for the latter, you might justly blame me should I search for foreign or for distant examples, when our own country and our own times furnish us with such ample materials: this day, as it is my subject, so shall it be my witness also; and I need call no other to prove the happiness of a people, whose prince ruleth 'in the fear of God.'

The virtues of the royal blood of Britain were never more amiably possessed than now, when the majesty of the crown is displayed in the softness of her sex who wears it, and seems

rather to invite than to command obedience: so equally are the graces mixed, that her authority creates no terror, her mildness no contempt; so tender is she of the privileges of her people, that the nation must ever praise her; so just to the rights of the crown, that her successors will never blame her. Her reign in every respect has been so just a transcript of the constitution, that time perhaps may make it doubtful whether our excellent constitution were not a copy drawn from the example of her government.

If the state may thus rejoice in the care of her princess, the church has equal right to boast of her protection. Our queen was born within her pale, and learned betimes to know and love her: when the fears of popery surrounded her, and when every prospect, wherever she turned her eyes, was dark and gloomy; when some who wore her honors forsook her cause, and some silently lamented her condition; in that day of her distress, our princess misliked her not, but followed the worst of her fortunes, till the wisdom of Providence has raised her at last to become the author of her best, to be a nursing mother to the church and all her children.

Whilst Britain has been thus cherished, thus happy at home, under the influence of a mild government, she has not been less glorious abroad, extending her victorious arms to every country, either to protect her friends or to subdue her foes. We had been so long unaccustomed to success, that it was thought a conquest not to be subdued; a triumph to defend ourselves: the British victory seemed to pine for her ancient heroes, her Harries, and her Edwards, and scarcely lived on the faded honors of Cressy Field and Agincourt, till the genius of this day arose, and taught her once more to gather fresh laurels in distant countries. To such a height of glory has this female reign arrived, such honor and such triumphs has it brought our nation, that should any future king prove unfortunate, Britain perhaps, grown superstitious on the successes of her queen, will wish 'he had been a woman.'

But great as these successes were, yet still they brought a grief with them, which easily found its way to a compassionate heart; the queen could not hear of victory without lamenting the loss of her brave countrymen, without pitying even her

conquered foes: and so tender a regard has she for mankind, that, notwithstanding all these honors of the field, she reckons it the glory of her reign, that she has stopped even the triumph of her arms by peace, and gave the harassed nations leave to respire.

One thing only she wants to complete her happiness, to see her subjects unite in love and mutual confidence; to see those heats and animosities buried in oblivion, which threaten the peace of our Israel. But why do I sully the glories of this day with mention of our divisions, those wounds of our country, at which her best life flows out, and leaves her sickly in the very season of her youth, and whilst all her honors bloom fresh around her? How earnestly has the queen commanded, exhorted, intreated, nay even begged of you to forget your resentments? And could you but offer up to her the quarrels of your country, it would be a more welcome present than should you lay the treasures of both Indies at her feet.

Thus happy in the affections of her queen, Britain must ever think of her with joy and pleasure: and yet one circumstance there is that often gives her pain, always when she reflects that her princess is mortal; witness her late distraction, when uncertain fame variously reported her princess's illness. Not Rome was more dismayed when Hannibal was at her gates; every thing was fear and confusion, and men began to look suspiciously on each other, as if in every face they had seen a foe; the 'treasury of the city' one would have thought was plundering; and yet no enemy was near, but Britain in her disorder was preying on herself.

Blessed be the Power, the almighty Power, that has dispelled these fears! Let every heart be lifted up in praise to his holy name, who hath given life and salvation to his servant, and hath not 'denied the request of her lips.'

And yet when she requested life, it was for her country's sake, and not her own; her mortality is what she oftener and more willingly thinks on than we do; and whenever she does, finds nothing to disturb her mind, but the concern for her people, who will be left behind her: a concern that has more than once been expressed in the most generous regard to posterity, by providing for the future peace and happiness of these king-

doms, in the settlement of the crown on the ILLUSTRIOUS HOUSE OF HANOVER: a blessing for which the nation can never be thankful enough. But it raises an indignation unbecoming this day, to hear some pleading their affection to this happy settlement, as a mark and distinction of their party; a settlement which is undeniably our common good, and I trust also our common care. But let no prospect of distant happiness, how entertaining soever, render us insensible of the present good we enjoy; but let every wish that looks to the succession centre in this point, 'that we may never see it; that our country may never lose it:' whilst we live, may this day return (and whilst it does return it always will) with fresh honor! but when we are forgot; when she, who is our glory, is called to a better throne, may late posterity enjoy the fruits of her care, in deriving the crown on so noble a family! As long as our wishes are confined within these limits, there is no reason to make a secret of our affections to the protestant succession; it is an affection which every lover of his country ought frankly to proclaim; which is the proper way of keeping this common concern from becoming a party cause; and stilling those fears and jealousies which are destructive of our peace and happiness.

May He, who stilleth the raging of the seas and the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people, send us peace and concord, and minds capable of enjoying the blessings which he has so plentifully showered on us! and to complete our happiness, may he add length of days to our gracious sovereign, and continue her to be a comfort to her people, till she shall as far surpass the oldest of her predecessors in number of years, as she has already outdone the bravest in honor and glory!

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE V.

ACTS, CHAP. VII.—VERSE 25.

THE text is part of the dying speech of St. Stephen, delivered to the high priest and the people just before he was offered up a glorious sacrifice for the truth of the gospel. The design of it was to set before the people of Israel the history of their redemption from slavery and idolatry, and excite them to attend to the present offers of peace through Jesus Christ, by showing them the fatal mistakes they had often made in despising or abusing former mercies: their conduct to Moses in this point enlarged on.

To draw parallels between the histories in Scripture and those of our own times, is a slippery subject, in which there is a danger of missing Scriptural doctrines, and publishing our own partial sentiments, under cover of that divine book which was given to amend them. The subject of this discourse therefore is confined to such observations and such applications of them, as naturally arise from the text and our own circumstances.

First, then, we may observe from the text that Moses, though raised by God in a wonderful manner to be the deliverer of his people, yet fell under great discouragements from his countrymen, for whose sake he was raised up: this topic enlarged on. Notwithstanding however this blindness of the people, the murderer, as they called him, was ordained by God to be their prince and deliverer; and they were at last happily convinced of their mistake, by receiving at his hand the blessings promised to their forefathers.

Secondly, we may learn what confidence and trust we ought to place in God for the deliverance of his church and true religion, notwithstanding the hopeless prospects which arise from human affairs: this point enlarged on. If ever hopes are justifiable, they are, when the honor of God and the truth of religion is concerned: the people of Israel had as little to boast of on their own behalf as other nations; but they were chosen by God to bear his name, to be witnesses of his truth in the dark ages of the world, to prepare the way for the coming of their great master; and though they were often afflicted, yet they were as often restored, until they were at last utterly rejected, for denying that great prophet for whose sake they had been so long and so often preserved.

Application of these observations to the people of this nation. Since the beginning of the Reformation in this kingdom, there never was so fair a prospect of a firm establishment of the protestant religion as at the present time; yet the people seem never to have had less sense of it: their deliverance is near, but they understand it not: this topic enlarged on. Allusion made to the various arts played off by the church of Rome, to prevent the foundation of this establishment. A succinct account given of the progress of the Reformation in this country, from its first step in the reign of Henry the Eighth, to the accession of George the First; in which the dangers it has run, with the various arts and designs of the papists, are clearly pointed out: whence we may learn wherein our true interest consists. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri:* if we cannot judge for ourselves, let us learn of our enemies to know wherein to place our security. The two greatest efforts made by popery to bring ruin on this church and nation with force and violence, were one at this time, the other in King James's reign; and their great provocation was, to see a succession of protestant princes likely to be established among us. And as this is their fear, so is it our security. If we consider the circumstances of

times past, and the doubtful condition in which we have often been, when our happiness has depended on one single life, we shall have reason to think that Providence has at this time both wisely and mercifully provided for our safety.

It is an easier matter to kindle the fires of popery and persecution, than it would be to extinguish them. Should the wishes of some take place, and a popish prince prevail over us, where will they next go for protection? What prince or family in Europe is left to which they may apply for succor? If therefore we have any sense of loyalty, any concern for our religion, our country, and ourselves, let us show it by a cheerful and steady obedience to the prince whom God has set over us.

With regard to the second observation, that notwithstanding the hopeless prospect of human affairs, the text affords grounds for dependence on God, this may well be spared; the application being made to our hands. God's care over us has already appeared, and we are likely to be saved, whether we desire it or no. Concluding exhortation.

DISCOURSE V.

Preached at the Temple Church, Nov. 20, 1715.

ACTS, CHAP. VII.—VERSE 25.

For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not.

THE text is part of the dying speech of St. Stephen, which he delivered to the high priest and the people, just before he was offered up a glorious sacrifice for the truth of the gospel of Christ. The design of it was to set before the people of Israel the history of their redemption from slavery and idolatry, and to stir them up to attend to the present offers of peace through Christ Jesus, by showing them the fatal mistakes they had often made in despising or abusing former mercies. Moses was their great prophet and their lawgiver; Moses was in the highest veneration among them; for his sake, and to preserve the authority of his laws, they refused to hearken to any other teacher; and therefore rejected the gospel as tending to subvert the constitutions of Moses. Yet how was this man received? How was this deliverer entertained? Was he not evil-intreated? Was he not, before he could work their deliverance, forced to seek his own by a hasty flight from them into the land of Median? When he appeared in the spirit of the Lord, to avenge the wrongs of his people, and smote the Egyptian who oppressed the Israelite, the very next day he was reproached by his brethren for the murder, as they called it: for he had given them a provocation which it seems they could not bear; he 'had showed himself unto them as they strove, and

would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?' So far did the private passions and resentments prevail against the considerations of public safety, that delivering them from the Egyptians was no merit, because he endeavored also to deliver them from one another.

To draw parallels between the histories in Scripture, and those of our own times, is so slippery a subject, so liable to be influenced by the passions of the speaker, who can easily overlook the circumstances which suit not with his view, choose out and adorn those which do; that in such applications of Scripture history there is very great danger of missing the Scripture doctrine, and publishing our own partial sentiments, under the cover of the book of God, which was given to correct and amend them. I shall therefore, without trying to show you how like we are in all respects, or in any, to the people of Israel, or how nearly our enemies resemble the Egyptians, confine myself to such observations, and such applications of them, as naturally arise from the text and our own circumstances.

First then, we may observe from the text that Moses, though raised by God in a wonderful manner to be the deliverer of his people, yet fell under great discouragements from his countrymen for whose sake he was raised up.

The people of Israel, at the time of the birth of Moses, were under so severe a bondage, that there was no human prospect of deliverance: those who were of strength sufficient, were held to such constant and hard labor, that they had neither time nor ability to contrive any thing for themselves. Could it be expected that any genius should arise from among the brick-kilns, to restore the liberty of Israel; or that one employed from his childhood in gathering straw should attempt to set up the promised kingdom? And that mere strength and number might not prevail, the Egyptians had taken care to destroy the male children of Israel; so that the prospect for the next generation was even worse than what the present had. But the providence of God turned these circumstances to his own wise ends. Had not the king of Egypt commanded the male children to be destroyed, Moses, it is probable, had been

bred as he was born a slave, and sent, as soon as he was able, to take his share of the hard labor imposed on his countrymen: but by being exposed for fear of the cruel king's command, he fell into the hands of the princess of Egypt, and had his education even in the court of Pharaoh, and 'became learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.' By this means he was qualified to undertake the great work which God had prepared for him; and Israel, though in the lowest condition, had one to go before them, who had been brought up in the dignity of a prince; and yet though he had lived in the plenty of Egypt, and florished in the court of its great king, he forgot not his distressed countrymen, but he partook in all their miseries with an affection which became him who was one day to be their deliverer. One would think that these circumstances, together with the prophecies relating to their deliverance, should have pointed out the person intended by God to bring about their redemption: Moses himself thought he should at least have been favored by his countrymen in his noble enterprise for their service; 'he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them:' but, as it follows in the text, 'they understood not.' This was so discouraging a circumstance, that he seems to have laid aside the thoughts of being able to serve them; he found that to accomplish the deliverance of Israel, he must struggle as well against the Israelite as the Egyptian, and subdue the slaves in order to their redemption, as well as the tyrants who oppressed them. And yet, notwithstanding this blindness of the people, the murderer, as they called him, was ordained by God to be their prince and deliverer; and they were at last happily convinced of their mistake, by receiving at his hand the blessings promised to their forefathers.

From whence we may learn, in the second place, what confidence and trust we ought to put in God for the deliverance of his church and true religion, notwithstanding the hopeless prospects which arise from human affairs.

Had we been to judge by the rules of human wisdom and policy, what hope was there that Moses should be the deliverer of that people, in whom he had so little interest, that he was

forced to fly from them for his own safety? But the counsels of God are not to be defeated either by the folly or the madness of the people; and his purposes shall stand, be those whom he intends to punish never so furious or outrageous, or those whom he intends to save never so weak and blind to their own interest. And indeed, were such great events to be guided by human counsels, a nation might be destroyed before they could agree in what method or by what means to be saved; so variously are men drawn by their passions and their interest, that it is very difficult for them to concur in preserving what all are equally concerned to preserve. In these circumstances, it is very natural for men to dwell on the melancholy prospect, and to forebode that ruin to themselves and their country, which seems to be the just consequence of such distracted counsels: but they ought to reflect that there is one higher than all, who can still the rage of the people, and bring peace and safety out of tumult and disorder, with as much ease as he produced light out of darkness, when he said, 'Let there be light, and there was light.' Were it not for the comfort arising from this providential care of God over the world, the best thing a wise man could do for himself would be to get out of it as soon as he could; the only way to secure himself from the miseries and calamities which men by their folly and their wickedness are perpetually drawing down on themselves and others. Nay, could we depend on this care and protection of God no farther than our own merits would justify our expectation, we might have reason still to despond. But as there is another time in which all men shall yield an account of their own doings; and as God has greater views oftentimes in saving and destroying nations, than punishing or rewarding the present inhabitants; and as mercy and goodness incline him to deal graciously with sinners, in allowing them farther means and opportunities of repentance and amendment, we may reasonably hope from his mercy and goodness to be more favorably dealt with than our consciences, if strictly examined, can give us ground to expect. And if ever these hopes are justifiable, then most certainly they are when the honor of God is immediately concerned in the event; and when the truth of that holy religion which Christ sealed with his own blood is part of the controversy. The

people of Israel had as little to boast of on their own behalf as other nations; but they were chosen by God to bear his name, to be witnesses of his truth in the dark ages of the world, to prepare the way for the coming of our Lord and Master; and though they were often afflicted, yet they were as often restored, till at last they were utterly rejected for denying that great prophet, for whose sake, and for the completion of the prophecies relating to him, they had been so often and so long preserved.

These are the observations I had to make to you from the words of the text. The application of them to ourselves is what I believe every body sees as well as myself. And yet I beg your patience, whilst with all truth and sincerity I discharge my duty and conscience as a minister of this reformed church, now openly attacked by its professed and inveterate enemies. Since the beginning of the Reformation in this kingdom, we never had so good a prospect of a firm establishment of the protestant religion as at this time; and yet I verily think we never had less sense of it; our deliverance is near us, but we understand it not. Whilst we have been striving together about things, however dear to us, yet still of less consequence most certainly than our liberty and religion, we have been in danger of being swallowed up by the common enemy; and the people, never till now insensible of the fears of popery, have stood by unconcerned, seeming, as it were, to invite that slavery and oppression which cost their forefathers so much blood and treasure to get rid of. Could you have thought that this soil, so often watered and enriched by the blood of martyrs shed by the cruel hands of popish tyranny, so often miraculously saved by Providence from Roman slavery and superstition, would ever yield such fruit as this? that England, famed throughout the world for the bulwark of the protestant religion; hated by her enemies, and envied even by her friends, for the best established church in Christendom, should so far forget herself, and the God who saved her, as to look with any patience on those chains from which she was so lately delivered? It is still more surprising that this should happen at the very time when Providence seems to have laid the best foundation for our peace and security, by settling a protestant prince in the throne

of these kingdoms, happy in heirs to succeed him in his crowns, and to perpetuate the blessing of liberty and pure religion to these nations. Whatever we think of this advantage, our enemies certainly judge right of it; they foresee that if this settlement prevails, their hopes are at an end, and therefore they are ready to hazard all to disturb and overthrow it: and it seems to have been the main point of the policy of the court of Rome, with respect to these kingdoms, from the earliest times of the Reformation, to secure themselves against a succession of protestant princes. When we have had a prospect of this happiness, then we have been attacked with their utmost fury; Rome has plied all her engines to prevent this foundation being laid amongst us of lasting peace and security. At other times, when the succession has been doubtful, and she had any hopes of seeing one of her own communion exalted, she has moved by gentler steps, and her fury has been abated by the hope of swaying the sceptre of a son of her own.

If we take a short view of this period, it will help not only to convince us of the truth of this observation, but also to give us a just prospect of the security and happiness which are now prepared for us, if we do not obstinately shut our eyes against the things which make for our peace.

The Reformation had its first rise here in the days of Henry the Eighth; he went so far as to throw out the pope, though at the same time he zealously maintained popery. The first breach happened on the point of the king's divorce; and though the court of Rome treated it as a matter of law and conscience, and sent it about to their canonists and divines, yet were they in truth guided by mere politic views: the queen was nearly related to the emperor; and Germany was then in such a state, many of its princes having received the Reformation, that Cæsar's power was never more wanted, nor more courted by Rome. In this difficulty the pope chose rather to hazard losing the king than the emperor: and the king, impatient of the ill usage and artificial delays of Rome, took a shorter way to his divorce, and threw off all subjection to the pope. Yet in his days he maintained himself and kingdoms in tolerable peace and quiet: the court of Rome had reason not to drive to the utmost extremity; popery still remained in its most essen-

tial parts; a fair inlet some time or other to a return of the papal power. It was doubtful also what issue the new queen might have; and the next in appearance was tied not only to popery, but to the pope also, on the plenitude of whose power her own legitimacy depended. When the king had a son born, yet still there were the casualties of childhood to support their hopes, and a prospect of an infancy in the throne, which could not but afford opportunities of practising on the kingdom for their own advantage. In the young king's time the Reformation was pushed with vigor; but, alas! his days were few, and Rome had all his time the prospect of a popish successor, which did not only support her hopes, but in some measure abate her fury. When Queen Mary came to the throne, then was the time to see with what spirit popery is to be restored in these kingdoms: the flames of persecution were kindled in all parts; the bishops, the clergy, and the people fell promiscuously a sacrifice to the enraged deity of Rome: nay, so far did the fury of these barbarians extend, that the helpless infant, forced from the mother's womb by the extremity of her torture, was thrown into the flames again, as guilty of the parent's heresy, and under the sentence of the holy court, which had condemned the mother without excepting her womb. It would be endless to relate to you the fiery trials of that time, when no age, no sex found mercy; but old and young, men and women, were led in triumph to the stake, and were forced to seal the confession of their faith with their dearest blood; and yet at that time there was a woman on the throne, in herself not cruel, and by the tenderness of her sex inclined to compassion; she was also obliged to her country, which rescued her from a rebellion formed in the very beginning of her reign, and placed her on the throne of her ancestors in spite of opposition: but neither the tenderness of her sex, nor her natural compassion, nor the sense of gratitude, could prevail against a popish confessor, who first misguided her conscience, and then by her conscience overruled all the sentiments of nature and humanity. If a woman could do all this; if one obliged by her country could be so unnatural in her returns to it, what have we to expect from one, who, if ever he comes, will come with anger and resentment against his country; who must be set on the throne by the

treasure and power of Rome, which must be repaid in the blood of heretics; that is, in the blood of the people of England? But to proceed.

The main policy of this reign was to secure such a succession of princes as might for ever dash the hopes of the Reformation in England: and for this purpose the wisest step was taken that human policy could contrive: Spain was the only kingdom of Europe not tainted with heresy, (as the Reformation is called;) its king was young, and bigoted to the superstition of Rome, and therefore chosen out as a proper match for the queen of England; and had that marriage produced heirs according to the hopes of our enemies, England, it is probable, had been at this time as deeply plunged in the darkness of popery as Spain itself; where superstition and idolatry appear in more ghastly forms than they do even at Rome, where the court of Inquisition sits in the fullest triumph, and scatters death and destruction throughout the realm. But the hope of issue failing, together with the queen's life, the glorious Princess Elizabeth ascended the throne, and the Reformation began once more to breathe in England. In the beginning of her reign, hopes were conceived by the popish faction that she might match with a prince of their communion, and their darling Philip was prevailed on to offer himself. But the queen was too wise to match with a prince, where the legitimacy of the marriage must have proved the illegitimacy of her birth; since she could have had her sister's husband only in virtue of that power by which her father had his brother's wife. After Philip, several others were proposed; but these hopes failing, the Roman Catholics, who had hitherto been permitted to join with the established church, to keep the way open to an easier reconcilement, were by the power of the pope intirely separated. In the queen's old age, when the thoughts of her marrying were laid aside, and the hopes of a popish successor in great measure defeated by the fate of the Queen of Scots, there was an attempt from the same quarter to set up a Spanish prince for successor, that they might obtain by birthright what they could not obtain by marriage; and a book full of learning was published by Parsons the Jesuit, to make out the Infanta's title to these crowns; so well did they understand that nothing less than the greatest

power could be sufficient to introduce the worst religion. By all which steps, through these several reigns, it plainly appears that the utmost desire of the court of Rome is to have a popish prince on this throne; they reckon their work done if once they obtain this point: give them but a popish prince to their heart, they will soon instruct him what to do with vows and promises, and coronation oaths; and in such a case the people likewise would be instructed to know their own interest, when it was too late to help themselves.

When James the First came to the crown, surrounded by a hopeful issue of protestant princes, the cause of popery was at the last gasp: they saw their downfal if this family stood, in which there was a prospect of a long succession of protestant heirs. A desperate case requires desperate remedies; here was no room for art and management, and therefore violence was now first used, and the horrid plot of the fifth of November was contrived, which, had it took effect, would have rid them not only of a protestant king, but of their greatest fear, the protestant heirs.

By what methods they afterwards distressed the king, and laid the foundation of that ruin which broke out in his son's time, to the destruction of this church and nation, and one of the best princes it ever had, would be tedious to relate. Nor need I say much of the succeeding reigns, which so nearly resemble the former, that from the restoration to our present gracious king, the case seems to be much the same as it was from the Reformation to James the First. King Charles the Second had no issue; and if he was not himself a papist, his successor was, in whose time this church and nation were brought to the brink of ruin: and though he had been saved from a bill of exclusion by the interests and loyalty of the church, yet no sooner was he on the throne, but he imprisoned her bishops, dispensed with her laws, and broke down all the fences that were raised for her security; in which confusion she had utterly perished, had not the providence of God rescued her by the means of a protestant prince, happily allied to the crown of England by marriage and by birth. In his and his successor's time the eyes of the popish faction were on the Pretender to the crown, and all their hopes centred in him.

As long as there was any prospect of defeating the protestant succession, they kept themselves within bounds, and were contented to work by policy, and not by force: but no sooner did they see a king of the reformed communion, with a numerous issue, mounted on the throne, but they threw off the mask; as they did in the like case of James the First, attempted directly his destruction and ruin. And will not all this teach us wherein our true interest does consist? *Fas est et ab hoste doceri:* if we cannot judge for ourselves, let us learn of our enemies to know wherein to place our security. The two greatest efforts of popery to bring ruin on this church and nation by force and violence, have been, one at this time, the other in James the First's reign; and their great provocation was, to see a succession of protestant princes likely to be established among us. And this is their fear, so is it our security. And if we consider the circumstances of times past, the doubtful condition we have often been in, when our happiness has depended on one single life, we shall have reason to think that Providence has both wisely and mercifully provided for our safety at this time. When the family of James the First was partly corrupted with popery, and near being extinguished for want of heirs, how providentially did God preserve one branch free from the infection, from which the present royal family is descended! And yet, to come to that which is the melancholy part of the application, how insensible do we seem to be of this blessing! What rebellions, what tumults and riots have we seen in the short compass of this reign! as if the people had forgot not only the care of their king, but of their country, their religion, and themselves: as if the fears of popery were all vain; as if superstition and idolatry, and the very terrors of an inquisition, were the mere delusions of a sick mind. These are the blessings which some are contending for; these will be the rewards of their pious undertaking to set up a popish prince over these kingdoms.

It is an easier matter to kindle the fires of popery and persecution, than it will be to extinguish them. Should the wishes of some take place, and a popish prince prevail over us; and should he not be so good as they vainly expect he will, where will they go next for protection? What prince or family in

Europe is left, to which they may fly for succor? The protestant religion has its last support; if it fails now, there is no other refuge; and should it be once lost in England, it will dwindle every where else; popery will overrun all like a torrent, and we shall return to a worse darkness than that from which we came out. If therefore we have any sense of loyalty to our present gracious king; if we have not quite forgot that obedience on which we have so long valued ourselves; if we have any concern for our religion, and the welfare of our souls, which depends on it; if we have any natural affection for our country, our friends, our families, or ourselves; let us show it by a cheerful and steady obedience to the prince whom God has set over us. All these motives plead not so much for him as for ourselves: for if ever obedience to their prince was the true interest of a people, now is the time it is so.

The second observation I made to you was, that notwithstanding the hopeless prospect of human affairs, the text affords ground of dependence on God.

In this part of our case, the application, I bless God, is made to my hands. His care over us has already appeared, and we are like to be saved, whether we desire it or no.

Let us then raise our hearts to a just sense of our deliverance, that we may unfeignedly adore his holy name for all his mercies; and let us strive together to promote his glory by a constant and steadfast adherence to the church established, by a dutiful and ready submission to our prince, and by love and charity one among another.

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE VI.

MATTHEW, CHAP. IV.—VERSE 17.

THE occasion of this meeting naturally suggests to our thoughts a consideration of the encouragements and the difficulties which attend the undertaking, as well as of the methods proper to be observed for attaining to so desirable an end. This however is declined; and instead of it, a view is taken of the gospel; on what foot it first set out in the world; and what it had to recommend it to the reason of mankind, abstracted from those signs and wonders which were wrought by God for its confirmation.

The first doctrine which our Lord taught was that of repentance, as necessary to qualify men for the kingdom of Heaven. *Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* What is to be understood by this expression may be learned from Mark i. 14. 15. Whatever we understand by the *kingdom of Heaven*, it is plain that the reason why it was said to be at hand, was because the time was fulfilled for the publishing the gospel to all the world, and that the exhortation of the text agrees with that in St. Mark, *Repent ye, and believe the gospel:* whence it is evident that repentance was inculcated, as necessary to prepare us for receiving the gospel of Christ. The same appears also from the preaching of John the Baptist. So also did the Apostles teach repentance as the first necessary step: this fully shown by examples. Before the consequences which arise from this state of the case are stated, a few observations are made to clear the way for what is to follow. We may observe then, that repentance was the very first thing insisted on,

wherever the gospel was published; before any new law was promulged, or even mentioned. Secondly, the gospel was ushered in by the doctrine of repentance, not only when it was delivered to the Jews, but also when it was proclaimed to the Gentile world: therefore the repentance taught did not regard any particular institution, but that general law of nature to which every man owed obedience in virtue of the reason and understanding with which God had endowed him. Thirdly, true repentance requires change of mind, and leads to a reformation of manners, with due obedience, for the future, to that law of righteousness against which the offence was committed: for where the obligation to any law ceases, there can be no call to repentance for disobedience: this doctrine shown to be that of Scripture.

The consequences now shown, which seem to be the natural result of this method, made use of in the publication of the gospel: the first of which is, that the religion of the gospel is the true original religion of reason and nature. It is so in part; it is all that and more. Repentance was necessary; but it was not all: it was the first step towards Christian perfection: see Heb. vi. 1.

This will appear by considering the nature of that repentance which our Lord, and those who came after him, preached to the world: repentance supposes a transgression, and transgression supposes a law; for, as the Apostle argues, *where there is no law, there is no transgression*: and since repentance consists in a change of mind, in rectifying what was before amiss, and in fulfilling that obedience which was before wanting, it is evident that to repent of the violation of any law is to return to the obedience of it. The question then is, against what law those offences were committed, the repentance for which was so necessary, that without it there was no admission into the gospel. At the time of its publication there were many forms and institutions of religion in the world; but

as these differed much from each other, they could not be the ground of that repentance, which, being generally taught, must respect some general law, which relates alike to all: and this can be no other than that which the Apostle has described in Rom. ii. 14. 15. However the light of reason and nature was darkened and obscured by ignorance and superstition, yet some remains of it were in all places to be found; and the general principles of religion were so riveted in human nature, that she could not but start at any thing which directly contradicted them: thus atheism was as detested a crime in the heathen as in the Christian world; and some were even thought worthy of death for so unnatural an opinion: this point enlarged on; whence it appears that the gospel was a republication of the law of nature, and its precepts declaratory of that original religion which was as old as the creation.

That this must certainly be the case, will appear by considering the nature of the thing in itself. The notions of good and evil are eternally and unalterably the same; which notions are the rules and measures of all moral actions, and are consequently necessary and constituent parts of religion; and therefore if the religion of nature was in its primitive state pure and uncorrupt, (which no one can well deny,) though there was sufficient reason for a republication of it, because of the great ignorance and superstition prevalent in the world, yet there could be none for any alteration of it. The duties of religion, considered as a rule of action, flow from the relation we bear to God and to each other; and religion must ever be the same as long as these relations continue unaltered.

That the case is so might be shown from the particular laws of the gospel, and their dependence on the maxims and principles of natural religion: this however would be too long a task. We may be content with one general proof, which reaches to every part of the Christian doctrine, and yet will not lead us beyond the bounds prescribed. Our Saviour in the

5th chapter of St. Matthew tells us, *that he came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them.* What his meaning was, he sufficiently explained in the following part of his sermon on the mount; in which, laying down first the old law, he showed in every instance what the true perfection of that virtue consisted of, which the law required: this point enlarged on. Since then it appears that the religion of the gospel is the true original religion of reason and nature, the second thing to be observed is, that it has, as such, a claim to be received independent of those miracles which were wrought for its confirmation.

This consequence will be admitted by all who allow the force and obligation of natural religion, and can be denied by none who know or understand themselves. The principles of religion are interwoven in the very frame of our minds; and we may as well run from ourselves, as from the sense of the obligations we are under: this point enlarged on.

But some one may perhaps ask, why he may not teach the religion of the gospel to the heathen, as well in his own name as in the name of Christ; since, being the very religion of reason, it wants no name to support it? To this we may reply, that if the heathen are such masters of reason as to want no teaching, the question is impertinent; and if they do want instruction, there is no comparison between the masters.

The truth is, that all the essentials of true religion are contained in that part of the gospel of which so much has been said; but how this religion came to need renewal by a special commission from heaven, how nature came to want that new light and additional assistance of the Holy Spirit which the gospel has given and promised, is a matter of another consideration; opening to us a new view, to see the reasonableness and necessity of the doctrines peculiar to Christianity; which, though not different, are yet distinct from the principles of reason and nature.

Had man continued in the purity of his first religion, he had wanted no second; the doctrine of nature had led him to the enjoyment of the glorious hopes of life and immortality to which he was born. But when he fell under the power of sin, he grew both blind and impotent, had but little knowlege left to find his duty, and still less his ability to perform it: this point enlarged on.

The Son of God came into the world not merely to restore the religion of nature, but to adapt it to the state and condition of man; to supply the defects, not of religion, which continued in its first purity and perfection, but of human nature, which was fallen from the original dignity of the creation. If death came in as the penalty of disobedience to the law of nature, it was an evil for which natural religion could afford no remedy; since no law provides a remedy against its own penalties: and though the world retained some notion of a future state, yet its hopes seemed to be rather the remains of that first state in which nature had the full prospect of life before her, and which subsisted when the blessing itself was forfeited, than any just assurance of a future life, to be purchased by virtue and obedience. To repair this breach, and to settle religion once more on the sure foundation of the hopes and fears of eternity, our blessed Lord *brought life and immortality to light again* by the gospel, &c.

But to what purpose was it to restore religion from the corruptions of ignorance and superstition? to what end was this *better hope* brought in? Since our first parents, who wanted not this hope or this knowlege, yet fell wretchedly from both by transgression, what security can we, their sons, still worse than they, promise ourselves from these advantages? It is we who are weak and degenerate, and who stand in need of restoration. Hence it is that our admission into the gospel is attended with a new birth unto righteousness; hence it is that we are put under the conduct and direction of the Holy Spirit,

who is always ready to comfort and support the faithful: this point enlarged on.

It is true, the gospel has taught us things which by nature we could not know; but they are all designed to confirm and strengthen our hope in God: it is true also, that some of its institutions are only necessary to supply us with spiritual strength to do our duty: these are the additions which it has made to natural religion; and we may well forgive the injury. Our blessed Saviour saw that the hopes of nature were lost, and therefore he brought to light again life and immortality.

These considerations may suggest to us what probable ground there is for success in our endeavors to spread the gospel of Christ in the dark corners of the world; and what is the true method of proposing it to the uninstructed part of mankind.

DISCOURSE VI.

Preached before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, at St. Mary-le-Bow, Feb. 17, 1715.

MATTHEW, CHAP. IV.—VERSE 17.

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

THE design of this meeting being to promote the propagation of the gospel in foreign parts; and the success of this work depending on such methods as human prudence can suggest, now left destitute of those miraculous assistances which the church of Christ in her infancy enjoyed; the occasion will naturally suggest to your thoughts the consideration of the encouragements and difficulties which attend this undertaking; and of the methods proper to attain this end, so much to be desired by every good and pious Christian: but yet, since I succeed much abler men, who have gone before me in the performance of this duty, and have with great judgment considered these necessary points; since also I stand at present before so many much abler, whose thoughts have long dwelt on this important subject; I beg leave to decline the unequal task, and to spend the time allotted me in considering on what foot the gospel first set out in the world, when it was published by our blessed Saviour and his Apostles; and what it had to recommend it to the reason of mankind, abstracted from those signs and wonders which were wrought by the hand of God for its confirmation.

The holy Evangelist tells us that the first doctrine which

our blessed Lord taught was that of repentance: 'From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent:' that he taught it as necessary to qualify men for the kingdom of heaven; 'Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' What is to be understood by the 'kingdom of heaven's being at hand,' may be learned from the parallel place in St. Mark, chap. i. 14. 15. 'Now, after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.' Now whatever we understand by 'the kingdom of heaven,' it is plain that the reason why it was said to be at hand, was because the time was fulfilled for the publishing the gospel to all the world; and that the exhortation in St. Matthew, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' is the same with that recorded in St. Mark, 'Repent ye, and believe the gospel.' From whence it is evident that repentance was inculcated as necessary to prepare us for receiving the gospel of Christ Jesus.

The same appears likewise from the preaching of John the Baptist, who taught the same doctrine, and in the same words with our blessed Saviour; he was that 'voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' As it was his proper office to prepare the world for the reception of the great Prophet who was to come after him, we may certainly conclude from his preaching, what was the necessary preparation required; and as his doctrine was confined to the single point of repentance, this was undoubtedly the necessary qualification for all who were to receive the gospel of the kingdom of God.

As our Saviour, and his forerunner the Baptist, taught repentance as the first necessary step to the gospel; so also did the Apostles. When the twelve were sent out by our blessed Lord in the 6th of St. Mark, the Evangelist tells us in the 12th verse, that 'they went out and preached, that men should repent:' St. Peter, in his first sermon recorded in the 2nd of the Acts, exhorts his countrymen to 'repent, and be baptised for the remission of sins:' verse 38. And in the 20th of the Acts, St. Paul tells us how he had spent his time, 'testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God,

and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ:' verse 21st; which were the very topics insisted on by our Lord, when he called on men to 'repent' and to 'believe the gospel.' The same account he gives of his preaching to king Agrippa, Acts xxvi. 20. namely, that he had showed both to Jew and Gentile, 'that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.' In the 11th of the Acts it is said that the Apostles and brethren in Judea heard that 'the Gentiles also had received the word of God.' St. Peter was called on to render an account of his conduct, in communicating the privileges of the gospel to the Gentiles: when he had vindicated himself to their satisfaction, they thus expressed themselves: 'Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.' Now it is evident that what God granted to the Gentiles was the same that the Gentiles received, and therefore 'repentance unto life' was the 'word of God,' published to the world by our Lord and his Apostles; and for this reason the writer to the Hebrews reckons repentance from dead works, and faith towards God, to be the first principles, or main foundation of the doctrine of Christ. Heb. vi. 1.

Before I proceed to lay before you the consequences which arise from this state of the case, I beg leave to make an observation or two in order to clear the way for what is to follow. You may observe then, that repentance was the very first thing insisted on, wherever the gospel was published, before any new law or doctrine was promulged, or so much as mentioned. The proof of this I need not attempt, since the passages already produced do plainly contain it, and indeed the nature of the thing speaks it; for the repentance taught could not respect any new law to be delivered to the world, against which no offence having been committed, no repentance could be required.

Secondly, that the gospel was ushered in by the doctrine of repentance, not only when it was delivered to the Jew, but also when it was proclaimed to the Gentile world. The Jews lived under the divine law delivered by Moses, and were guilty of many offences committed against that law, to which they owed obedience; but the Gentiles were not under that law, nor had they been ever called to the obedience of it; and there-

fore the repentance which was taught, as the introduction of the gospel, did not regard any particular institution, but that general law of nature to which every man owed obedience, in virtue of the reason and understanding with which God has endowed him.

Thirdly, that true repentance requires change of mind, and leads to a reformation of manners, and a due obedience for the future to that law of righteousness against which the offence was committed; for where the obligation of obedience to any law ceases, there can be no call to repentance for disobedience. This doctrine is so plain in Scripture, and so uniformly taught by all the ministers of our church, that I would willingly suppose no one ignorant of it. The Baptist sufficiently explained himself, exhorting such as came to his baptism, 'to bring forth fruits meet for repentance:' to which general instruction his particular admonitions always correspond. To the hard-hearted and uncharitable Jews, he said, 'He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.' To the publicans, whose crime was extortion, he said, 'Exact no more than that which is appointed you.' To the soldiers, who were noted for rapine, false information, and the like vices, he said, 'Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages.' In like manner our blessed Saviour, when he dismissed the woman taken in adultery, he let her depart with this advice: 'Go and sin no more.' So did he instruct also the man whom he had set free from the infirmity which was the punishment of his iniquity: 'Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee:' teaching neither the one nor the other any new doctrine with respect to their particular cases, but referring both back to that law which they had transgressed, as the proper measure of their future obedience.

I shall now proceed to lay before you such consequences as seem to me to be the natural result of this method made use of by our blessed Lord and his Apostles, in publishing the gospel to mankind.

And the first is this: that the religion of the gospel is the true original religion of reason and nature. It is so in part; it is all that and more. Repentance was necessary, but it was not all.

Repentance was the first step towards Christian perfection: see Heb. vi. 1.

This appears by considering the nature of that repentance which our Lord, and those who came after him in the ministry of the gospel, preached to the world: repentance supposes a transgression, and transgression supposes a law; for as the Apostle argues, 'where there is no law, there is no transgression.' And since repentance consists in a change of mind, in rectifying what was before amiss, and in fulfilling that obedience which was before wanting; it is evident that to repent of the violation of any law is to return to the obedience of it: and he that exhorts and calls you to repentance, calls you back to the obedience of that law against which you had offended. The question then is, against what law those offences were committed, the repentance for which was so necessary, that without it there was no admittance into the fellowship of the gospel of Christ. The laws of the gospel, considered as such, are evidently excluded on the present view; for repentance being the first thing every where taught, and antecedently to the publication of any of the rules and precepts of the gospel, the law not yet published could not be the rule of that repentance which related to sins already committed. At the time of the publication of the gospel, there were many forms and institutions of religion subsisting in the world; but as these were very different from one another, insomuch that if some were true, others were certainly false; so they could not be the ground of that repentance which being generally taught to all the world, to the Gentile as well as the Jew, must respect some general law, which related alike to all, and the obligations to which were in some degree universally felt and acknowleged: and this can be no other than that which the Apostle to the Romans has described in chap. ii. 14. 15. 'When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.' However the light of reason and nature was darkened and obscured by the ignorance and superstition of the world, yet some remains of it were in all places to be

found; and the general principles of religion were so riveted in human nature, that she could not but start at any thing that directly contradicted them: thus, for instance, in the great branch of natural religion, which relates to the worship and service of God, though mankind had universally erred and defiled themselves with many pollutions and abominations, yet atheism was as detested a crime in the heathen world as it is in the Christian; and some, we know, were thought worthy of death for being the maintainers of so unnatural an opinion. A sense of the moral duties between man and man was better preserved; and there are not many vices condemned in the gospel, which were not infamous before in all the civilised parts of the world. This general law, as the Apostle tells us, was the ground-work of conscience, the testimony of the conscience plainly showing the work of the law to be written in the heart; and this is a farther evidence that this law of nature was the foundation of that repentance which was to usher in the gospel; for as the preaching of repentance necessarily refers himself to the consciences of men, to point out to them the guilt of their actions; so must his doctrine necessarily relate to that law, which is the principle or origin of conscience. Since then the doctrine of repentance, with which the gospel set out in the world, had reference to the law of reason and nature, against which men had every where offended; and since repentance infers the necessity of a future reformation, and a return to that duty and obedience from which by transgression we are fallen; the consequence is manifestly this, that the gospel was a republication of the law of nature, and its precepts declarative of that original religion which was as old as the creation.

That this must certainly be the case, will appear by considering the nature of the thing itself. The notions of good and evil are eternally and unalterably the same; which notions are the rules and measures of all moral actions, and are consequently necessary and constituent parts of religion; and therefore if the religion of nature, in her primitive state, was pure and uncorrupt, (which will not, I presume, be denied,) though there was sufficient reason for a republication of it, because of the great ignorance and superstition which had grown on the world, yet there could be no reason for any alteration of it; for

though the world was the worse for abusing the religion of nature, and might want to be reformed by a divine instructor, yet the religion of nature was not the worse for being abused, but still retained its first purity and simplicity. The duties of religion, considered as a rule of action, flow from the relation we bear to God and to one another; and religion must ever be the same as long as these relations continue unaltered. If our first parent was the creature of God, so are we; and whatever service and duty he owed, in virtue of this dependence, the same is due from us; nor can this relation be ever made the ground of different duties in his case and in ours: if therefore nature rightly instructed him at first how to serve his Maker, our obligations being the same with his, our rule must be the same also. The case is the same with respect to the duties owing from man to man; and it would be as reasonable to suppose that the three angles of a triangle should be equal to two right ones in one age, and unequal in another, as to suppose that the duties of religion should differ in one age from what they were in another, the habitudes and relations from which they flow continuing always the same.

That the case is in fact what I have represented it to be, might be shown from the particular laws of the gospel, and their dependence, from the maxims and principles of natural religion: but this would be rather the work of a volume than a sermon. I will content myself therefore with one general proof, which reaches to every part of the Christian doctrine, and yet will not lead me beyond the bounds to which I am confined. Our Saviour in the 5th of St. Matthew tells us, 'that he came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them.' What his meaning was, he sufficiently explained in the following part of his sermon on the mount: in which, laying down first the old law, he showed in every instance wherein the true perfection of that virtue consisted which the law required. The law forbade murder and adultery; our Lord declares that not only the immoral actions, known by those names, were restrained, but even the internal corruptions of heart from which they flowed; and extends the prohibition to hatred and to lust, one the parent of murder, the other of adultery. Since then our Lord so fully declares that his

purpose was to perfect and complete the law and the prophets, it remains to be considered what notion he had of the law and of the prophets: in the 22nd of St. Matthew, the question was put to him by a lawyer: 'Which is the great commandment in the law?' Our Saviour answers, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,' &c. 'This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Having laid down these two great rules, he thus declares his sense with respect to the subject of our present inquiry; 'On these commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' If the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments, then the doctrine of our Saviour, which is the perfection of the law and the prophets, must hang on them likewise. Now if you will allow that the love of God, and the love of your neighbor, are fundamental in the law of reason and nature (as undoubtedly they are), you must also allow that whatever may be deduced from them, by rational consequence, must be a precept of the law of nature: whatever therefore hangs on these two commandments, must necessarily be a part of natural religion; and that all the law and the prophets do so hang, and consequently the doctrine of the gospel, which is the perfection of them, you have had our Saviour's express testimony. Since then it appears (as I think) that the religion of the gospel is the true original religion of reason and nature;

The second thing I shall observe to you is, that it has, as such, a claim to be received independent of those miracles which were wrought for its confirmation.

This consequence will be admitted by all who allow the force and obligation of natural religion, and can be denied by none who know or understand themselves. The principles of religion are interwoven in the very frame and make of our minds; and we may as well run from ourselves, as from the sense of the obligations we are under. If the law which is in our members should get the better of the law of our minds, and lead us into the forbidden paths of vice and immorality; though obedience cannot hold us, yet guilt will never forsake us; and our own consciences will not permit us to forget the law, however our corrupt passions may induce us to transgress it. This

sense will always keep a passage open to the heart, for instruction to enter in; and there needs nothing more to show that man is obliged to submit to the rules and laws of reason, than to show that he is a rational creature; since if reason be of any use, it is for our direction; and to suppose a creature to have reason to direct him, and yet that he ought not to be directed by it, is a contradiction: so far therefore as the gospel represents to us the law of nature, it needs only to appeal to the reason of mankind for its authority, and may leave its cause to be tried in every man's own breast before the tribunal of conscience; and how far this is the case of the gospel, has been already shown at large.

But some one perhaps may have a mind to ask, why he may not teach the heathen the religion of the gospel, as well in his own name as in the name of Christ; since, being the very religion of reason, it wants no name to support it? To which I answer; that if the heathen are such masters of reason as to want no teaching, the question is impertinent; and if they do want instructing, there is no comparison between the masters.

But the truth is, that all the essentials of true religion are contained in that part of the gospel, of which so much has been already spoken; but how this religion came to stand in need of being renewed by a special commission from heaven, how nature came to want that new light which the gospel has given, and those additional helps and assistances from the influence of the Spirit of God which the gospel has promised, is a matter of another consideration, and opens to us a new view, to see the reasonableness and necessity of the doctrines peculiar to Christianity, which, though not different, are yet distinct from the principles of reason and nature.

Had man continued in the purity of his first religion, he had wanted no second; the doctrine of nature had led him to the enjoyment of the glorious hopes, to which he was born, of life and immortality. But when he fell under the power and dominion of sin, he grew both blind and impotent, had but little knowlege left to find his duty, and still less his ability to perform it. The history of the fall is preserved to us in sacred writ; but let the Scripture be silent, and let experience only speak. Look back into the past ages of the world, as far as the clue of

history can guide you, and tell me in what place the purity of natural religion was preserved: observe the manners of men and their religious services, and when you are tired with the sad prospect of the ignorance and barbarity of some, the superstition and idolatry of all, tell me once more, did the world want an instructor or no? If it did, we have little reason to complain that it had one, still less to stumble at the dignity of the person who undertook the desperate cause of nature; or to reject his authority, because he is greater than we know how to conceive, even the only begotten Son of God.

He came into the world, not merely to restore the religion of nature, but to adapt it to the state and condition of man, and to supply the defects, not of religion, which continued in its first purity and perfection, but of nature, which was fallen from the original dignity of the creation. Man was born the heir of glory and immortality; but our Saviour found him under the power of sin and of death. If death came in as the penalty of disobedience to the law of nature, as we learn from the sure word of prophecy that it did, it was an evil for which natural religion could afford no remedy; for no law provides a remedy against its own penalties; which would be to weaken and destroy the obligations to obedience, which the penalty was intended to inforce. And though the world every where retained some notion or other of a future state, and was fond of cherishing the languishing hopes of immortality; yet these hopes seem rather to be the remains of that first state, in which nature had the full prospect of life before her, and which subsisted when the blessing itself was forfeited, than any just assurance of another life after death, to be purchased by virtue and obedience. To repair this breach, and to settle religion once more on the sure foundation of the hopes and fears of eternity, our blessed Lord 'brought life and immortality to light again' by the gospel; and published to the world the new doctrine of a resurrection from the grave, of the truth of which doctrine we had the first instance, and the fullest confirmation, in his own victorious triumph over the powers of death and of darkness. Hence it is that we are said to be begotten again through Christ Jesus unto a lively hope, or unto the hope of life: hence also we are told that 'God hath now

appointed a day, in which he will judge the world by the man Christ Jesus.' Hence it is that these two, or rather this one article relating to a resurrection and a judgment to come, was the main thing which the Apostles had in commission to publish to the world; insomuch that, when a new Apostle was to be chosen in the room of Judas, it was required, as a necessary article, that he should be qualified to be a competent witness of the resurrection of Christ, in which the authority of this great article was founded.

But to what purpose was it to restore religion from the corruptions of ignorance and superstition; to what end was this 'better hope' brought in? Since our first parents, who wanted not this hope, nor this knowlege, yet wretchedly fell from both by transgression, what security can we, their sons, still worse than they, promise ourselves from these advantages? It is we that are weak and degenerate; it is we that most of all want to be restored: this original corruption made it necessary, in order to save the world, not only to restore religion, but nature herself. Hence it is that our admission into the gospel is attended with a new birth unto righteousness; hence it is that we are put under the conduct and direction of the Holy Spirit, who is our fellow-laborer in the gospel, and in all times and in all places ready to comfort and support the faithful. If, to strengthen our confidence in him, we are told that he is in all respects equal to the extensive charge; that, being the eternal Spirit of God, he can in all places and at all times discharge the office; this knowlege, which was communicated to make our faith and hope consistent, and to set both on a reasonable foundation, ought to be no objection against either. And since these articles of our creed, being beyond the discovery of human reason, are placed on the surer foundation of the demonstration of the Spirit, in mighty signs and wonders, they ought to be no stumbling-block to us; for the reason may teach us to embrace the remedy which she could not provide.

It is true, the gospel has taught us things which by nature we could not know; but they are all designed to confirm and strengthen our hope in God: it is true also that there are some institutions in the gospel which in their own nature are no constituent parts of religion; but they are such only as are neces-

sary to enable us to do our duty, by conveying to us new supplies of spiritual strength. These are the additions which the gospel has made to natural religion; forgive its injury. Our blessed Saviour saw that the hopes of nature were lost, therefore he brought to light again life and immortality: he saw that we were corrupted, not able to resist evil, and therefore he supplied the defect by the assistance of his holy Spirit; pardon his care, and do not think the worse of him or his religion, for the great provision he has made in it for your security.

These considerations may perhaps suggest to your thoughts what probable ground there is to hope for success in our endeavors to spread the gospel of Christ in the dark corners of the world; and what is the true method of proposing it to the uninstructed part of mankind. But as I choose to decline this subject, and to leave it to the properer hands on which it is placed, I shall shut up all with this petition: that God would hasten the completion of the prophecies relating to the kingdom of Christ; that he would give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession, that he may be his salvation to all people.

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE VII.

PSALM CXXII.—VERSE 6.

NOTHING places religion in a more disadvantageous point of view, than an opinion that the present peace and prosperity of the world is foreign to its ends and purposes. It is shown that a concern for the welfare of our country is not only a political but a religious virtue; a care that becomes us not only as citizens, but as Christians: more particularly because religion is so connected with our civil rights, that there is no hope of saving it out of the ruins of our country. The psalm from which the text is taken turns wholly on two topics; the temporal prosperity of Jerusalem considered as the head of the civil government, in which the happiness of the whole nation was concerned; and as the seat of true religion, as God's own city, on whose peace depended the security of that religion: these points enlarged on.

From this great authority in the text two considerations are brought home to ourselves: I. what reason we have on both these accounts to bless God for our deliverance from the late rebellion: II. what obligations we are under, from the same motives, to use our own best endeavors in perpetuating the blessing of this deliverance.

I. Some arguments there are which require rather a capacity of feeling than any great acuteness of judgment to apprehend them; such as those drawn from a sense of pleasure or pain, from an experience of the conveniences or inconveniences of

life: this position applied to the case in question. Had men a proper sense of the miseries of times past, it would teach them what consequences they might expect from any successful attempt against the present establishment, or what usage a protestant church would find, under the corruption and superstition of that of Rome. Reasons given for the exclusion of papists from the affairs of government. Historical account of the treatment which *heretical* princes have met with from the church of Rome.

Conduct of those who had courage and plain dealing enough to refuse their assent to the Hanoverian succession, and thereby to forego civil advantages, contrasted with the guilt of those who, after having bound themselves by solemn oaths and obligations, openly or secretly favored the rebellion.

II. Our obligation to perpetuate our deliverance considered. This obligation is but the necessary consequence of the duty which we are now met to perform. Thanksgiving is little more than a solemn mockery, if we feel no value for the deliverance; and in vain do we pray for God's assistance in any case, while we neglect the means of helping ourselves which he has put into our power.

How much the preservation of the establishment depends on the success of public councils, every body knows: what private men can do, they best know: many are well qualified by station and abilities to promote the interest of their king and country; and surely it is every man's duty to do whatever he thinks he lawfully may do, to serve these desirable ends. Unhappiness of the nation, from its being divided into factions, dilated on. Evils of this state described.

Under such unfortunate circumstances there is more reason to wish for, than ground to expect, peace and unanimity at home. It is easy for a few designing men to fill the people with unjust apprehensions of their rulers; though his Majesty, in his wisdom and goodness, took at the very beginning the

properest step to prevent this mischief, by declaring that he would always make the constitution in church and state the rule of his administration. Concluding exhortations and rules for quieting the angry spirit that is abroad, for suppressing false hopes, and allaying false fears.

DISCOURSE VII.

Preached before the House of Commons at St. Margaret's, Westminster, June 7, 1716; being the day of public thanksgiving to Almighty God for suppressing the unnatural Rebellion.

PSALM CXXII.—VERSE 6.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.

THERE is nothing places religion in a more disadvantageous view than the opinion entertained by some, that a concern for the present peace and prosperity of the world is so foreign to all the ends and purposes of true religion, that a good man ought not to suffer his thoughts, much less his passions and affections, to be engaged in so worthless a subject.

The inspired writers have indeed, with repeated instructions, guarded us against the temptations of riches, honors, and pleasures, and prepared us to undergo the calamities and afflictions of life with firmness and constancy of mind. But what then? So does the general exhort his soldiers to bear with patience the fatigues of war, to despise the dangers of it, and in the day of action to press forward, regardless of life itself; yet still victory and triumph, and the sweet enjoyments of peace, are the end of war; and the soldier, though he must not fear to die, yet it is his business to live and conquer. Religion is a spiritual warfare, and the world is the scene of action, in which every good man will be sure to meet with enemies enough; and it is not the end he aims at, but the opposition he meets with in pursuing that end, that makes it necessary for him to

be inured to bear the miseries and afflictions of the world. Were the case otherwise, it would be iniquity to pray for temporal peace and prosperity; since we never ought to seek that by prayer to God, which the rules of our religion will not permit us to be concerned for. So that the exhortation in the text, to 'pray for the peace of Jerusalem,' implies that we ought to be concerned for her peace, so concerned as to do whatever is in our power to procure and to preserve it; since prayer to God for his assistance supposes the use of our own endeavors to obtain the blessing we contend for: and that we may not think that the Christian religion has made any alteration in this case, St. Paul has exhorted us to pray, and to give thanks for all men; especially for kings, and all that are in authority; for this reason, 'That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.'

On this view then a concern for the peace and prosperity of our country is not only a political but a religious virtue; a care that becomes us, both as we are men and as we are Christians; which stands not on the narrow bottom of self-interest, but rises from a more generous principle, partaking of the love of God, and of our neighbor; since, whilst we seek the public peace, we show our beneficence to one and our obedience to the other.

But there is a farther consideration, which makes the public peace to be the just concern of every good man. The present state of religion in the world is such, and so connected every where with the civil rights of mankind, that there is no probable ground to hope that even the religion we profess can be saved out of the ruins of the liberty of our country. If therefore it be a care worthy of a good man to preserve the purity of religion in his own time, or to transmit it safe to posterity; if we may wish, as well as pray, that he may 'lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty;' or that his sons and his daughters may stand up after him before the Lord in the congregation of his saints; if these be lawful desires, and such as we may by our best endeavors labor to obtain, our religion will never permit us to be unconcerned spectators in any cause that affects the prosperity of our country; on which, under God, depends the liberty we enjoy of freely professing the faith once delivered to the saints.

The psalm from which the text is taken turns wholly on these two topics; the temporal prosperity of Jerusalem, considered as the head of the civil government, in the florishing condition of which the happiness of the whole nation was concerned; and considered as the seat of true religion, the city in which God had chose to dwell, and to place his name there; on whose peace consequently depended the security of the holy religion which was there taught and professed. The first thing that gave vent to the holy Psalmist's joy, was observing the unanimity of the people in their attendance on the service of God in the holy city: 'I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord: our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.' From hence he entertains himself with the beautiful prospect of Jerusalem, as it was the centre both of religious and civil government, in which were seated the ark of God and the throne of David: from whence issued the streams of justice and holiness, to refresh and make glad all the cities of Israel. 'Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together;' or, as the old translation reads, 'that is at unity in itself: whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. There are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.' The contemplation of this happy state of his country naturally vented itself in the warmth and ardor expressed in the text and following verse: 'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.' This affectionate prayer and exhortation was founded in a concern for the temporal happiness of his country and nation; and therefore he adds, 'For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee;' and in a just regard for the honor of God and his religion, therefore, he closes all with this reflexion: 'Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good.'

You see the extent of the duty recommended in the text, and the reasons in which it is founded; and since we have so great an authority to justify our care and concern for the public peace and happiness of our country, both in regard to our civil rights, and to the interest of that holy religion which we profess, I beg leave to bring the arguments home to ourselves, and to the occasion of this day, by observing to you,

I. What reason we have on both these accounts to bless God for our deliverance from the late rebellion: and,

II. What obligations we are under from the same motives to use our own best endeavors to make perpetual the blessing of this deliverance.

Some arguments there are which require rather a capacity of feeling than any great acuteness of judgment to apprehend them: such are they which are drawn from the experience of sense, from pleasure or pain, from the conveniences or inconveniences of life; of which no man is a capable judge who wants the sense proper to distinguish between the pleasure and the pain, or the experience of the convenience or inconvenience under debate. One would think that an ordinary imagination would serve to represent the difference of liberty and slavery; of the state in which every man may sit under his own vine, and eat his bread with cheerfulness; and that condition, in which nothing is to be called our own, but the misery of submitting to despotic power: and yet we find that the generality of men are not masters of so much reflexion as is necessary to arrive at this small degree of knowlege in the affairs of the world. It is the observation of Tacitus, the Roman historian, one allowed to be a good judge of mankind, that the people of Rome were prepared for slavery by the long reign of Augustus, which had almost worn out the race of men that had tasted the sweets of liberty and freedom. Ours seems to be the reverse of their case: we have so long enjoyed the protection of our laws, and are got at such a distance from the late times of distress, that we have not memory enough of them left to awaken our care to prevent their return. Our fathers, who lived under the dread of popery and arbitrary power, are most of them gone off the stage, and have carried away with them the experience which we their sons stand in need of, to make us in earnest to preserve the blessing of liberty and pure religion which they have bequeathed us. O that I had words to represent to the present generation the miseries which their fathers underwent! that I could describe their fears and anxieties, their restless nights and their uneasy days, when every morning threatened to usher in the last day of England's liberty! when men stood mute for want of counsel, and every eye was watching with impa-

tience for the happy gale that should save the kingdom; whose fortunes were reduced so low as to depend on the chance of wind and weather.

Had men such a sense of the miseries of the time past, it would teach them what consequences they were to expect from any successful attempt against the present establishment. They would not want to be instructed what a free nation had to fear under the government of one, educated in sight of all the arts of tyranny and oppression; or what usage a protestant church would find under the influence of a prince trained up from his cradle in the superstition and corruption of the church of Rome. Were the influence of religion confined within the narrow compass of every man's own breast, the subject, perhaps, would have but little reason to be inquisitive about the prince's persuasion; but since it is part of every man's religion to propagate the doctrine he professes; and since the methods of propagation in the hands of a prince, which are strengthened by the power of the temporal sword, are not likely to be confined to the gentle measures of reason and instruction; the religion of the prince must be considered as a condition requisite to the happiness and prosperity of the people. In our own case this consideration is the more necessary, because it is the avowed principle of the church of Rome, not only to wish for the conversion of those who dissent from her, but to force it by all the terrors of worldly power. And a nation must want common sense, to put the sword of government into his hands, who they know will be bound in conscience to use it, either to the destruction of their souls or their bodies. There is no one doubts but that there are natural incapacities sufficient to exclude one otherwise intitled to government. An outrageous madman nobody would trust, because nothing is to be expected from him but havoc and destruction. Now if a moral defect will produce the same evil consequences, why should not the moral incapacity be esteemed as strong a bar as the natural? It matters not whether it is conscience or madness which causes the destruction: a nation surely has a right to prevent such a violence, without being troubled to know whether the distemper from which it grows, has its root in the head or in the heart. The Romanists have little reason to complain of this instance of

our care for our own security, since it is the doctrine of their church, taught by councils, confirmed by popes, and defended by their ablest schoolmen and divines, that heretics have no right to dominion; that they may be deposed by the pope, and their subjects absolved from all bonds of allegiance to them. And their practice has been of a piece with their doctrine: Henry the Third of France was excommunicated for a less crime, for favoring only the succession of a protestant prince; and thus excommunicated, was murdered by a poor monk. Henry the Fourth was so strongly opposed by the League, animated by the pope, that he could never fix himself in the throne till he changed his religion. If we come to our own country, Queen Elizabeth was formerly deposed by a bull from Rome, and her subjects absolved from their obedience to her: nay, thrice was she deposed by three popes, to show how constant they were to this point. When King James the First came to the crown, his first compliment from Rome was by a mandate of Clement the Eighth, declaring him incapable of holding the crown, because he was a heretic; that is, because he was a protestant; and therefore enjoining his subjects to yield him no duty or obedience. But notwithstanding this doctrine, so well confirmed by authority and practice, yet considering the present state of Britain and the views of Rome, I should not be surprised to hear her emissaries maintaining, with all solemnity, the contrary opinion. When a protestant prince was to be deposed by Roman Catholics, it was proper encouragement to tell them that heresy was a forfeiture of dominion; but now that they want the assistance of the protestants of England to advance a popish prince to the throne, we may certainly expect to hear from them that religion is out of the question when the claims and titles of princes are under debate; and perhaps too we may be ready enough to believe them; so much 'wiser are the children of this world in their generation than the children of light.'

The principles on which the legality of the present establishment are maintained, are I think but improperly made a part of the present quarrel which divides the nation. There are but few who have not precluded themselves on this point: those I mean who have had courage and plainness enough to own their

sense, and to forego the advantages either of birth or education, rather than give a false security to the government, which under their present persuasion they could not make good. To these I have nothing more to say, than to wish them what I think they well deserve, a better cause; but to us who had bound ourselves by previous oaths and obligations in the most solemn manner in the world, the accession of his majesty could administer no occasion of reconsidering this question: there was nothing new required of us; we had no faith to give which was not already plighted, and bound on our souls by the most sacred engagements. Those therefore under these circumstances who have openly engaged or secretly favored the rebellion, are void of all excuse; they are guilty of the greatest crime under the greatest aggravation; and seem to have no refuge left but that which was Adam's policy, 'who hid himself from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden,' because he had nothing to cover his nakedness.

Should any such, quitting all pretences of dissatisfaction with the lawfulness of the present government, plead disobligations or resentments of any sort as the ground of their proceedings, to them we answer in the words of our blessed Saviour, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.' Where did they learn that rebellion is the proper remedy in such cases? The church of England has no such doctrine; and if they cannot govern their own passions, yet, in justice to her, they ought not to use her name in a cause which she ever has and will disclaim.

It is perhaps too high a degree of virtue to expect in this age that men should act with a steady view to the public good, without being drawn at all by the bias of their own interest. Whoever builds on a dependence on such a behavior from any set of men, will, I believe, find himself mistaken. Allow then, what cannot be avoided, that men will differ in their views and private interests, yet still methinks there is one common concern, which is the preservation of the whole, in the security of which every man's private fortune is founded; and it is as absurd for a man under any resentment whatever to enter into measures destructive of his country's peace, as it would be for him to burn the title to his estate, because the tenant was behind in his rent.

If therefore we have any concern for the peace and happiness of our country, or any zeal to preserve the light of the gospel with which these kingdoms have been blessed; or if our consciences are not hardened against the influence of the most solemn oaths and obligations, under which we have bound ourselves to be true and faithful to our present Sovereign; we must detest this rebellion, and with sincere hearts adore the goodness of God, who hath wrought this deliverance for us. Let us then, in the second place, consider,

II. What obligations we are under from the same motives to use our own best endeavors to make perpetual the blessing of this deliverance.

This obligation is but the necessary consequence of the duty which we are met this day to perform. Thanksgiving is little more than a solemn piece of mockery, if we have no value for the deliverance for which we would seem to be thankful. If any, or if all the reasons already mentioned, ought to excite us to pray for the peace of our country, or to bless God for restoring it, they must also move us to do what is in our own power to preserve it; since in vain do we pray for the assistance of God in any case, whilst we neglect to use the means of helping ourselves which he has put in our power.

How much the preservation of the present establishment depends on the success of public councils every body knows; and yet should I, by any particular application, seem to suppose that your zeal in this cause wanted a spur, I might well be thought to 'be the only stranger in Israel, and not to have known the things which have come to pass in these days.'

What private men can do they best know: many are certainly well qualified by their reputation, their station, and great abilities, to promote the interest of their king and country; and surely it is every man's duty to do what he thinks he lawfully may do, to serve these desirable ends. And this would be allowed to be a very reasonable demand, were not the nation unhappily divided into factions, which have swallowed up all public duty, and transferred to themselves that allegiance which is due only to the crown. Were there but half the zeal to serve the public, which men daily express for the interest of

their several parties, there would be but little encouragement for a second attempt to disturb our peace.

It is wonderful to observe, in all cases, this steady adherence to party: those who ascribe it to mere corruption, and the sordid ends of private gain, see but little into the true cause; there is another principle more remote from common observation, which has a greater influence; a principle in itself more generous, though oftentimes in its consequences not less pernicious; I mean, the regard which men have for their own credit and reputation. This is the natural fruit of the best soil; every good man has it, and it is the life of virtuous actions, when its views are rightly directed. But where kingdoms are divided into opposite factions, the true standard of reputation will always be lost, and men will grow into esteem, not for their virtuous actions, but for their party merit. Hence it comes to pass that in civil disputes it is as reproachful to deviate from your leader's opinion, as it is for a private soldier to desert his general in the day of battle. The obligations of the public duty, or of private opinion, will obtain no quarter for you; for such is your case, that you may with less hazard of reproach commit almost any vice, than venture to be in the right without the support of a majority. This evil is the more to be lamented, because its infection spreads most easily among the best. Helvidius Priscus lived in the degeneracy of the empire, but had all the virtues of an old Roman; yet he was observed to be *appetentior famæ, quando etiam sapientibus*, as the historian remarks, *cupido gloriæ novissima exuitur*. But whatever may be said in excuse for this passion, in matters which a willing casuist may persuade himself to be indifferent; yet surely it is to be highly blamed, when the prosperity of our king, our country, and our religion are at stake: in such a time every man should run the hazard of being true to the public, especially if he cannot desert it without being false to himself.

There is another evil, not much unlike the former, though of a different kind, which is owing also to our unhappy divisions. If, on one side, it may be sometimes difficult for men who have no ill intention to the public, to discharge their duty to it; on

the other, there will always be some to rejoice when they do wrong; though zeal for the government never produces a more preposterous effect than when it makes men take pleasure in the number or in the perverseness of its enemies. Those who are sincerely and with any judgment in the interest of the king, have nothing more to wish than to see the hearts of all his majesty's subjects united in obedience and affection to him; or, if that is not to be obtained, to see as many as can be. But there is a little kind of men, who, mistaking their party zeal for affection to the government, seem transported when those, whom they have been taught to think their enemies, do by any misbehavior render themselves obnoxious to the present powers: as they rejoice in such misbehavior, so are they apt sometimes to provoke it, and think themselves never better intitled to plead their own merit, than when they have urged others to such things as a wise man and a friend to the government would with all his care have labored to prevent.

Under these unhappy circumstances there is more reason to wish, than there is ground to hope, for peace and unanimity at home. It is an easy matter for a few designing men to fill the people with great, and, at the same time, very unjust apprehensions from their governors; though his majesty, in his great wisdom and goodness, took at the very beginning the properest step to prevent this mischief, by declaring that he would always make the constitution in church and state the rule of his administration. As our constitution in church has many friends, so to our great misfortune has it some enemies; and as it cannot be dissembled but that the fears and jealousies on one side, so it will hardly be denied but that the hopes and expectations on the other, have been very unreasonable. And considering how people, in a state of suspicion, watch and observe each other, how naturally the fears of one increase by seeing the hopes of the other, without knowing or inquiring what ground or foundation there is for them; it will be necessary, in order to quiet the angry spirit that is among us, to suppress these hopes, as well as to allay those fears; and I pray God to reduce them both to their proper bounds, that we may all be content to obey on the same terms on which his majesty has assured us he is disposed to govern.

But above all let us take care to justify ourselves in our concern for our holy religion, which is our best plea and surest pledge of divine favor, by adorning in our lives and conversations the doctrine which we profess. We have with commendable zeal, on many occasions, stood in defence of our religion, at the expense of the blood and treasure of the nation: let it not be observed by our enemies, that the religion of England is a mere watch-word for an army, never valued but when it is to be fought for; and in times of peace laid by, condemned to rust, with other the useless arms and instruments of war. Our religion has domestic as well as foreign enemies; we have seen with what an uncommon zeal it has been attacked by infidels; professing not to introduce any religious persuasion, but to throw out all. These men, who deride all religion, will be found in the end to be the best agents for them who labor to bring in the worst; and the interest of our country being so united to the cause of religion, such profane liberty is destructive of our security, since every heart that is alienated from a sense of God and religion, carries off with it a pair of hands from the defence of the public.

To a zeal for true religion let us add charity, the crown of all virtues; and let us sanctify this day of our deliverance by laying aside all hatred, malice, and desire of revenge; that we may with one heart and one mind glorify God for his mercies, and implore his protection for ourselves, our king, and our country; that he would give us the blessings of truth and peace; that he would long preserve our sovereign; and that there may never want a protestant prince descended from him, to 'go in and out before his people.'

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE VIII.

ACTS, CHAP. XX.—VERSE 35.

THESE words conclude the moving discourse of St. Paul to the elders of the church of Ephesus; his last advice, and the best legacy that he could leave them. Two things he especially recommends; the care of the church of God; and provision to be made for the necessities of the poor and helpless: the former duty in verse 28.; the latter in the words of the text. In speaking of the duty of charity, in that restrained sense of the word in which it regards only the temporal wants of our brethren, there are three things proper to be considered: I. how far, and to whom, its obligations extend: II. the objects who are duly qualified to receive charity: III. what is the blessing and reward which attend on the faithful discharge of this duty.

With regard to the first point, it is shown, by the Apostle's words and his example, that he calls on all indifferently, the elders and pastors of the church, as well as others, to labor, working with their hands; and that he charges on their labor, not only the duty of providing for themselves and families, but also the care of supporting those among them who were indigent and necessitous: the measures, however, and proportions of charity not being determinate, but relative to the condition of times and persons, varying and changing with them, it must be absurd to apply the rules of charity, found in the holy Scriptures, to ourselves and our own times, without making due allowance for the difference in our circumstances and theirs to whom the rules were first directed. Hence it becomes neces-

sary to consider the state of the times and persons to which those rules have reference.

The church of Christ at the first consisted almost wholly of the poor and indigent; whence St. Paul chose rather to work for his bread with his own hands, than to make his ministry burthensome to the churches, though he always asserts his right to be supported by them in his function: nor were the learning and education of the first converts much better than their fortunes; even the rulers of the church being often taken from trades and mean employments, the Spirit of God wonderfully supplying all their defects: this point enlarged on.

These circumstances of the first Christians considered, it is easy to justify the propriety of the Apostle's exhortation in the text: though it would scarcely be at this time a proper one. *We* must rather be exhorted to part with something out of our abundance to relieve the necessities of the poor. Those however who are able to work, who are blessed with health and strength and vigor of limbs, are rich with respect to others who are incapable, through want of limbs, or by the weight of years, to assist themselves: when therefore bodily labor was the whole wealth of the church, there was a necessity that the strong should work to support the weak; or the weak must have perished in their want and poverty. This shows the reason of such precepts, in which men are exhorted to part with something, even out of the little they can earn by the sweat of their brows.

This also will help us to understand some other passages of Scripture relating to the exercise of charity: examples given: hence also we may learn to answer the first inquiry, viz. how far the duty of charity extends. The Apostle brings all under it who are able to labor; but this must be mitigated by the difference of circumstances between us and those whom he addressed. He pressed all to labor for the purpose of being charitable, because he had none to speak to but such as lived

by their labor: but if he were now to address us, his exhortation would doubtlessly be directed to the rich and prosperous: this point enlarged on: exhortation, founded on St. Paul's advice to the Corinthians, that they should lay by in store, the first day of every week, as God had prospered them.

Second subject of inquiry, viz. who are duly qualified to receive charity.

I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak. By the *weak* here we must understand such as are not able to labor and work for their own living; for since all who can labor are placed on one side and made debtors to charity, *the weak*, who are placed on the other side, and have a right to be supported by charity, must be such as are not able to work or to provide for themselves in any honest calling. This case is fully determined by the Apostle in 2 Thess. iii. 10-12. The general rule therefore arising from these apostolical precepts, seems to be this: that such only are due objects of charity, who are, through sickness or other infirmity, rendered incapable of labor. Yet this rule, rigorously construed, would be found inconsistent with reason and equity; for the man who is most able and willing to labor, may be the most pitiable and unexceptionable object of charity: this point enlarged on.

But though the rule of charity must not be so restricted as to exclude all who can labor, it may seem reasonable perhaps so to limit it, as that all who can work, should work before they are intitled to assistance from others; yet even to require this in all cases would be cruel and inhuman: for instance, if you saw a man fallen under great calamities, who had relieved thousands in the days of his own prosperity, would you, when the hand of God was thus on him, turn aside from his affliction and say, Go, work for your living?

Since then there can hardly be any general rule fixed which will be equally applicable to all cases, it may be worth

while to examine the reason and equity from which this duty flows, which may serve to direct us in it.

Charity is a relative duty, and supposes the distinction of rich and poor; since without it there could be no reason assigned why any man should part with what he has to another who is already in as easy a condition as himself: the distinction of rich and poor supposes property, for if all things were in common, one man could hardly be richer than another: but then how unequally soever the good things of the world are divided, the wants and necessities of nature are shared in common; and it cannot be supposed that God sent men into the world with such wants and cravings, merely to starve and perish under them: yet how shall their wants be supplied, who have nothing to supply them with? Steal they must not: it remains therefore, that they must obtain the things they want from the proprietors of the world, in exchange for such services as they can perform. But, it may be said, is this a sufficient source for their maintenance? Will the rich so accept the services of the poor? This would be a hard question, were there not an equal necessity on both sides; had not Providence so ordered it that the rich can no more live without the poor, than the poor without the rich: this topic enlarged on.

It is agreeable then to reason and equity that the poor who have strength and ability to labor, should work for their living. It is next considered, how the duty of the rich stands with respect to this sort of poor.

The right which all men have to maintenance and subsistence is a superior right to that of property; for the great law of self-preservation is antecedent to all private laws and possessions whatever; the consequence of which is, that in the last result the property of the rich is subject to the maintenance of the poor: this point enlarged on. As reasonable as this may seem, yet it is hard to tell every particular rich man what the measure of his duty is in this case, or how many poor

he ought to employ: but the wisdom of Providence has in great measure superseded this difficulty; for a rich man cannot enjoy his estate, or live answerably to his condition, without creating a great deal of work for the support of the poor.

Hence we may judge what real iniquity there is in the temper and practice of the penurious miser: that he denies to himself the comforts and enjoyments of life, is the least part of his crime; for whilst he pinches himself, he starves the poor, and withdraws from the needy and industrious that maintenance which God has provided for them.

Whenever this ordinary method of supporting the poor fails, the providing for them is a debt lying over the possessions of the rich; for this is a necessary condition of that law which secures them in their property, by making it penal for the poor to dispossess them by violence. The reasonableness of our poor laws shown from hence.

We see then how the duties arising from the distinction of rich and poor, stand on the ground of natural reason and equity.

The gospel, though it has left men in possession of their ancient rights, yet has enlarged the duties of love and compassion; has taught the rich to look on the poor not only as servants, but as brethren: this point enlarged on.

To speak of the duty strictly, charity must begin where the maintenance of the poor fails; for whenever it becomes impossible for them to provide for themselves, it becomes the duty of others to provide for them. Now work being the maintenance of the poor, it is evident that, whenever this fails, they become objects of charity; and this happens many ways: these enlarged on: *the report read.* Last thing proposed for consideration, viz. what is the blessing and reward attending on the faithful discharge of this duty: *it is more blessed to give than to receive.*

First; if we consider the different conditions into which men

are divided, and their several duties; if we consider the obligation of the rich to assist the needy, and that of the poor to toil for a mean livelihood, we shall have reason to bless God, who has placed us on the happier side, and thankfully to comply with the duty of our condition; whence this comfort may be added to it, that it shall not be taken from us.

Secondly; in regard to present pleasure and satisfaction attending on works of charity, the giver has in all respects a better share than the receiver: this point enlarged on.

Thirdly; if we look beyond this present scene, the difference is still wider. There is no virtue in being relieved: a poor man is not a better man for the charity he receives; it rather brings with it an increase of duty: it may happen that it may be a burden on his future account, and will be so if he misapplies it. But the giver has a better prospect before him: this enlarged on.

DISCOURSE VIII.

Preached before the Lord Mayor, &c. at St. Bride's, April 23, 1717.

ACTS, CHAP. XX.—VERSE 35.

I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

THESE words concluded the moving speech which St. Paul made to the elders of the church of Ephesus, when he took his final leave of them. The time he had to discourse with them was but little, and the occasion was very solemn; which circumstances would determine him to mention nothing to them but what he judged to be of the last consequence and concern; and what they ought always to remember, as the dying words of their great teacher and apostle. At the 25th verse you find him, under the passion of a father, bidding adieu to his children and the world; 'And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.' But to show that this care of them would outlive himself, he gives them his last advice, the best, the only legacy he had to bestow. Two things he especially recommends to them; the care of the church of God, and the providing for the necessities of the poor and helpless. The former charge you have at the 28th verse; 'Take heed, therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.' The latter you

read in the words of the text: 'I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

There are some duties so essential to religion, so necessary to form the character of a good man, much more of a good Christian, that they always have been, and I hope will always continue to be, the preacher's common topic. Yet this I know is in some respects a disadvantage, and that exhortations of this kind are esteemed to be so much things of course, that they are often used with more effect by others, from whom they are less expected. I have need therefore to bespeak your favor, that I may be heard on this subject, without incurring the censure of being thought a common beggar. And yet not to dissemble my intention, beg I would; partly indeed for your sakes, whose necessities can no otherwise be relieved but by charity; but much more for your sakes, whose ample fortunes, if rightly administered, intitle you to the choicest blessings of the gospel; 'For it is more blessed to give than to receive.'

In speaking of the duty and obligations of charity, in this restrained sense of the word, in which it regards only the temporal wants and necessities of our brethren; there are three things proper to be considered.

First, how far the obligations of this duty extend; for that they do not extend equally to all is evident, because such as are qualified to receive are in all ordinary cases exempted from giving.

Secondly, who are duly qualified to receive charity.

Thirdly, what is the blessing and reward that attends on the faithful discharge of this duty.

The first thing to be considered is, how far this duty extends; I have showed you all things, says the apostle, 'how that so laboring' ye ought to support the weak. In the verses preceding the text he had set before them his own example, and the method he took to provide for himself and those who were with him. 'I have coveted,' says he, 'no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.' Now the exhortation of the text being founded on the example

which the apostle himself had given, and those words, 'That so laboring ye ought to support the weak,' necessarily referring to such labor as St. Paul 'had undergone,' when his own hands ministered to his own necessities; it is evident that the apostle directed that part of what they could earn, even by the labor of their hands, should be set aside and dedicated to works of charity. The same direction is repeated in his Epistle to the Ephesians, chap. iv. 28. 'Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.' Where you find labor enjoined them, not only that they may have an honest means of supporting themselves, but that they might have something likewise to spare in charity to such as were in distress, and unable to work for their own living. As the apostle pleads his own example to the elders of the church of Ephesus, so does he likewise to the Thessalonians in his second Epistle written to them: 'Neither did we,' says he, 'eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power,' (i. e. a right to claim a maintenance as ministers of the gospel,) 'but to make ourselves an ensample for you to follow us:' chap. iii. ver. 8. 9.

From these passages laid together, it is manifest that the apostle calls on all indifferently, the elders and pastors of the church, as well as others, to labor, working with their hands; and he charges on their labor not only the duty of providing for themselves and families, but also the care of supporting those among them who were indigent and necessitous: but the measures and proportions of charity not being things of a determinate nature, but such as are relative to the circumstances and conditions of times and persons, and vary and change together with them; it must be absurd to apply the rules relating to charity, which are to be found in the holy Scriptures, to ourselves and our own times, without making a due allowance for the difference in our circumstances and theirs to whom the rules were first directed. And therefore to give you a just sense of the meaning of the text, and of other apostolical rules concerning the practice of charity, it will be necessary to show you what

was the state of the times and persons to which those rules have reference.

The church of Christ at the first preaching of the gospel consisted almost wholly of the poor and indigent, such as were hardly able to support and maintain themselves by their labor, much less to be liberal towards the support of others: for this reason St. Paul chose rather to work for his bread with his own hands, than to make his ministry burdensome to the churches; though at the same time he asserts the right he had to be supported by them in his function, notwithstanding the narrowness of their own circumstances. The learning and education of the first converts were no better than their fortunes; and even the rulers of the church were oftentimes taken from trades and mean employments; the Spirit of God wonderfully supplying their defects, and enabling them under all outward disadvantages to promote the cause of the gospel with great courage and success. On this account the gospel is spoken of as the peculiar portion and inheritance of the poor; our Saviour gives it as a characteristic of himself and his mission, that 'the poor had the gospel preached to them:' Matth. xi. 25. And St. Paul addressing to the Corinthians, discovers to us the condition of that church; 'Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are:' 1 Cor. i. 26. 27. 28.

These circumstances of the first Christians considered, it is easy to justify the propriety of the apostle's exhortation in the text. When you reflect how poverty reigned through the whole body, you will not think it strange that the apostle speaks of labor, even to the elders of the church; since their own labor and work were the only riches the Christians of those days were in possession of; and it must be either perverseness or ignorance that makes some argue from this and other like passages of Scripture, against a settled maintenance for the

Christian clergy; without seeing that the consequence, if there be any thing in it, must equally affect the whole body of Christians: for the reason why the governors of the church were poor, was because the whole church was so; and if the example must be pressed to oblige the present times, all men must part either with their estates or their religion; otherwise we cannot be in the condition of the primitive church. It would at this time of day be no very proper exhortation to call on all Christians, without distinction, to work with their hands, that they might have something to spare in charity: but it was not only proper, but necessary in the beginning, when there was no other source of riches in the church but the work and labor of Christians. In the text you see the elders, and with them all others, were called on to labor, that they might be able to support the weak; and in the Epistle to the Ephesians the precept is general, 'To labor, working with the hands,' that there may be something to spare to him that needeth. Can you imagine that nothing is fit to be dedicated to charity but what is earned by bodily labor? or that those who have plentiful fortunes and estates are obliged to work with their hands, that they may by their labor supply the wants of others, which they can better and more effectually supply out of their large revenues? It may be, and certainly is, very proper for us to exhort you to part with something out of your abundance to ease the wants of the poor; to spare something out of the superfluities of fortune to support the necessitous; but it had been very improper for the apostles so to have exhorted Christians, at a time when there were none who had either abundance or superfluity; all they could do was to admonish and persuade those who were able to labor more abundantly, that they might be in a condition to contribute to the relief of such as were unfit for work by age, sickness, or other infirmity. Those who are able to work, who are blessed with health and strength, and soundness of limbs, are rich with respect to those who are incapable through want of limbs, or by the weight of years, to assist themselves; and therefore when bodily labor was the whole riches of the church, there was a necessity that the strong should work to support the weak; or that the weak should perish in their want and poverty. And this shows the reason of such precepts

of charity, in which men are moved to part with something, even out of the little they can earn by the sweat of their brows.

This will help us likewise to understand some other passages of Scripture relating to the exercise of charity. St. Paul gives the Corinthians timely notice of his intention to make a collection among them for charitable uses; and exhorts them to lay by a little every week, as they could spare it, that he might find them prepared to contribute when he should come. Now this plainly regards their poverty and low circumstances; for had they been rich, there had been no need for it; but they were not so wealthy as to pay bills at sight; and therefore their only way was to prepare their sum by little and little, as their circumstances would give them leave to spare it.

In the second Epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle is on the same argument, and presses them to be liberal with great earnestness; but that he might not seem to bear too hard on their necessities, he thus corrects himself: 'I mean not that other men be eased, and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want:' 2 Cor. viii. 13. 14. What does this equality mean, which he would introduce between the givers and receivers of charity? Must we strip ourselves so far as to be on a level with the poor, who ask our alms? This is a hard saying, and if pursued strictly, would introduce great confusion and disorder into the world. But if you consider the condition of the church when the apostle wrote, you will see how properly he addresses them. They might well have said to him, why must all the burden lie on us? What have we that we do not purchase by irksome toil and labor? To prevent which complaint, the apostle is beforehand with them in declaring that he meant not that they should be burdened, and others set at ease: had he been applying to the rich and wealthy, there could have been no occasion for this caution, for they can give with a liberal hand, and yet not be burdened. So likewise the equality he speaks of has the same view; he presses it not as in itself just or necessary; but in respect to the time, it could not be avoided; for when there are none but poor to relieve the poor, it is plain how near the equality must be between the giver and the receiver. This equality, therefore, the apostle

does not lay down as a general rule and proportion to be observed in charity, but rather excuses it, as the necessary circumstance of the charity of those times.

From what has been said, we may learn to give an answer to the first inquiry, namely, how far the duty of charity extends? The apostle brings all under the obligations of it who are able to labor; but this must be mitigated by the difference of circumstances between us and those to whom the apostle spoke. He pressed all to labor, in order to their being charitable: the reason is plain, he had none to speak to but such as lived by their labor: but were he in this place at this day, his exhortation, I doubt not, would be directed especially to the rich and wealthy, to such of you as enjoy the blessings of heaven in an uncommon degree. Those who live by their labor are rich and prosperous in comparison of the poor wretches who move miserably on crutches, or who want hands to help themselves; and they owe a tribute to God for the strength they enjoy of his gift. This is plain from the apostle's rule; and if it is, if even the meaner sort are indebted to their great Master, and must pay an acknowlegement out of the little they receive; how much greater are your obligations, who neither toil nor spin, and yet are clothed in glory, who neither reap nor gather into barns, and yet are fed in plenty? This is plain. But it is harder to say with respect to the lower part of mankind, where the obligation to this duty begins; for although some who labor may be debtors to charity, yet all are not, because all are not able to answer the necessities of themselves and their families by the profit of their work; and such can be under no call to contribute to others. If I may have leave to deliver an opinion in a matter no where clearly determined, I would found it on the advice which St. Paul gives to the Corinthians, that they should lay by in store the first day of every week, as God had prospered them; that is, that some part of what remained after a provision for the present occasions of themselves and families, should be reserved to charity. In this view, all who are in a saving way, or who may be so with prudent care, are under the obligations of charity; for it is but reasonable that we should do good in proportion as we grow rich. Between our own present wants, and the present wants of others, nature

will admit of no comparison; but when we are able to lay up for ourselves, it is hardly consistent with the love we owe our brother, to be so partial to ourselves as to suffer the care for our own future wants to shut out the consideration of his present misery. But this matter is left to every man's discretion, in order to prove his love, since too strict rules would in great measure destroy the virtue of charity, the true value of which lies chiefly in this, that it is a free-will offering.

Let us then proceed to the second inquiry, namely, who are duly qualified to receive charity.

'I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak.' By the 'weak' here we must understand such as are not able to labor and work for their own living; for since all who can labor are placed on one side, and made debtors to charity, the weak, who are placed on the other side, and who have a right to be supported by charity, must be such as are not able to work, or to provide for themselves in any honest calling or employment. This case is fully determined by the apostle in his second Epistle to the Thessalonians: 'When we were with you,' says he, 'this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread:' chap. iii. 10. 11. 12. Here you see all such as could work excluded from the benefit of charity, and laid under a necessity to labor by this injunction: 'If they will not work, neither let them eat;' that is, let them not be supported in their idleness, but be compelled by hunger to do their duty, that they may, as the apostle speaks, 'eat their own bread,' and not become a burden on the charity of the church.

The general rule then arising from these apostolical precepts seems to be this: that such only are due objects of charity, who are through sickness or other infirmity rendered incapable of labor. And yet this rule, if construed to a rigorous sense, will be found inconsistent with reason and equity; for it may happen that the man who is most able to labor, and who does labor to the utmost of his strength and power, may be the most

pitiable and unexceptionable object of charity: the reason is, because a man is not in all cases able to earn so much as the necessities of himself and family require, and then he must either perish or be relieved; and his working for his maintenance as much as he can is so far from excluding him, that there cannot be a better plea in his behalf. Where poor families are numerous, and consist mostly of young children, who can bring in nothing to the common stock by any thing they are capable of doing, this case often happens; and the wants of the family exceed all that the diligence and industry of the parents can provide.

But though we cannot state the rule of charity so as to exclude all who can labor; yet it may seem reasonable perhaps so to limit it, as that all who can work should work before they are intitled to any assistance from others. There is much more equity in this than the other; yet even to require this in all cases would be cruel and inhuman: we know the casualties that all human things are subject to; we have seen many reduced to poverty and want, from the most florishing and prosperous condition: fire and water, winds and storms, which are the secret ministers of Providence, cause mighty changes in the world, and often place the richest on the same level with the poorest; and whenever it pleases God to set such instances before us, the tenderest regard is due to their misfortunes. When you see a man fallen under such calamities, one perhaps too who has been a father to the needy and friendless, who has relieved hundreds in the days of his prosperity, would you, when the hand of God was on him, turn aside from his affliction and say, Go, work for your living? Though indeed, in a reasonable way of judging, they who have not been inured to labor from their youth, but have had a liberal ingenuous education, may be fairly reckoned in the number of those who are not able to work. The plea of the unjust steward in the gospel, when it was put into the mouth of such an honest unfortunate man, has every thing in it to move your pity and compassion; 'I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed.'

Since then there can be hardly any general rule fixed, which will be equally applicable to all cases, it may be worth our

while to examine the reason and equity from which this duty flows, which will serve to direct us in all the various circumstances under which the objects of charity present themselves.

Charity is a relative duty, and supposes the distinction of rich and poor; since, if there were no such distinction, there could be no reason assigned why any man should part with what he has to another, who is already in as easy a fortune and condition as himself. The distinction of rich and poor supposes property; for if all things were in common, and every man had a right to serve himself at discretion out of the heap, one could not be richer than another, but every man would have an equal title to every thing: but then how unequally soever the good things of the world are divided, the wants and necessities of nature are shared in common: the poor are as sensible of hunger, and thirst, and cold, as the rich are; and it cannot be supposed that God sent men into the world with such wants and cravings, merely to starve and perish under them: and yet how shall their wants be supplied, who have nothing to supply them with? Steal they must not; for that would be to invade the sacred law of property, and overturn the order which God has settled and appointed: it remains therefore, that they must obtain the things they want from the proprietors of the world, in exchange for such services as they are able to perform.

But is this, you will say, a sufficient source for the maintenance of the poor? What if those who are in possession should refuse to accept the service of the poor in exchange for their wealth? This would be a hard question, were there not an equal necessity on both sides; had not Providence so ordered it, that the rich can no more live without the poor, than the poor without the rich; which being the case, the poor, who are able to assist the rich, can never want a means of subsistence. How would a rich man differ from a poor one, were he to serve himself in all the necessities of life? What would signify your large tracts of land, were you to plough and sow with your own hands? What pleasure or advantage would your numerous flocks yield, were you to spin the wool yourselves, before you could be defended from the winter's frost? Since then the rich are under a necessity of being served by the poor,

as much as the poor are of being maintained by the rich, it evidently follows that the rich have as good a right to require service from the poor as the poor have to demand maintenance from the rich; and consequently the rich may as reasonably withdraw their maintenance as the poor withdraw their service; which shows the equity of the rule in general, 'If any man will not work, neither let him eat;' for, in truth, were the poor to be maintained without working, the rich would be in the worse case of the two; but there can be no obligation on the rich to exercise a charity which would destroy the very distinction of rich and poor; and therefore there can be no obligation on the rich to maintain an idle poverty.

It is evidently then agreeable to reason and equity, that the poor, who have strength and ability for labor, should work for their living. Let us in the next place consider how the duty of the rich stands with respect to this sort of poor.

The right which all men have to maintenance and subsistence is a superior right to that of property; for the great law of self-preservation is antecedent to all private laws and possessions whatever; the consequence of which is, that in the last result the property of the rich is subject to the maintenance of the poor. Since then the rich cannot in reason preserve their property longer than the poor a way of maintenance; and since the poor have no other way, ordinarily speaking, but their labor; it follows that the rich are as much obliged to employ the poor as the poor are to work for the rich; and one is as much the necessary consequence of the distinction between rich and poor as the other.

As reasonable as this may seem on the general view, yet it is hard to tell every particular rich man what the measure of his duty is in this case, or how many poor he ought to employ; but the wisdom of Providence has in great measure superseded this difficulty; for a rich man cannot enjoy his estate, cannot live answerably to his fortune and condition, without creating a great deal of work for the support and encouragement of the poor. The gayest of their attire comes through the hands of the poor; and he that makes a fine garment for you, will earn a coarse one at least for himself; he that searches the seas and woods to furnish dainties to your table, supplies his own at

the same time with wholesome, though less delicious fare. Every man therefore who lives answerably to his condition, does his part in furnishing the poor with work and maintenance; and in this method the poor receive support from the rich in proportion to the different degrees of their wealth; for if all live suitably to their condition, every man will furnish work to the industrious in proportion to his fortune.

On this view of the world, you may judge what real iniquity there is in the temper and practice of the covetous penurious miser: that he denies himself the comforts and enjoyments of life is the least part of his crime; for whilst he pinches himself, he starves the poor; and by living like a beggar in the midst of plenty, he withdraws from the needy and industrious that maintenance which God has appointed for them. Human laws have provided no remedy for this evil, nor indeed can they; but it may one day perhaps be found as criminal to rob the poor of their work, as to rob the rich of their possessions. Nay, this oppression often meets with its reward in the second or third generation, even in this world. It is common to see the miser's son or grandson squander the wealth of his ancestor with the utmost folly and profuseness; and when we behold such instances, can we help thinking that the providence of God is using the extravagance of the son to do justice to the poor, who were injured and oppressed by the penury of the father? For whatever mischief extravagancy may do to private men and families, yet this good at least flows from it, that the same extravagance which is the undoing of a vain rich man, often makes way for the advancement of many an industrious poor one; or is at least, for the time it lasts, a new fund of work thrown into the maintenance of the needy.

Whenever this ordinary method of supporting the poor fails, the providing for them is a debt lying over the possessions of the rich, as a necessary condition of that law which secures them in their property, by making it penal for the poor to dispossess them by force or violence. And this shows the reasonableness of our own law, which has subjected all the estates and fortunes of the kingdom to the maintenance of the poor in defect of other means; which is not a new burden laid on private property by the mere strength of an arbitrary law, but

is the voice of reason and nature, acknowleged and inforced by the wisdom and power of the legislature.

You see then how the duties arising from the distinction of rich and poor stand on the foot of natural reason and equity.

The gospel, though it has left men in possession of their ancient rights, yet has it enlarged the duties of love and compassion, and taught rich men to consider the poor not only as servants, but as brethren; and to look on themselves not only as the masters, but as the patrons and protectors of the needy. On this view, the industrious poor are intitled to the rich man's charity; since in the candor of the gospel we ought to assist our poor neighbors, not only to live, but to live comfortably: and an honest laborious poverty has charms in it to draw relief from any rich man who has the heart of a Christian, or even the bowels of nature. Mean families, though perhaps they may subsist by their work, yet go through much sorrow to earn their bread: if they complain not, they are more worthy of regard; their silent suffering, and their contented resignation to Providence, intitle them to the more compassion; and there is a pleasure not to be described in words, which the rich man enjoys, when he makes glad the hearts of such patient sufferers, and by his liberality makes them for a time forget their poverty and distress; that even with respect to the present enjoyments the words of the text are verified; 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

But to speak of the duty strictly, charity must begin where the maintenance of the poor fails; for whenever it becomes impossible for them to provide for themselves, it becomes the duty of others to provide for them. Now work being the maintenance of the poor, it is evident that, whenever their work fails, they become objects of charity; and this happens many ways: sometimes it happens for want of employment; and whenever it does, it is a noble instance of charity to furnish work for such useful hands. It is a charity which the rich may make subservient either to their pleasure or their profit; and be it either profit or pleasure which accrues to the rich man, as it arises from charity, it will bring a blessing along with it; and look, whatsoever he doth, it shall prosper.

Sometimes their want arises from idleness, which is generally attended with great corruption of morals. When this is the case, it is a kindness, rather than a punishment, to inure them to labor by wholesome discipline; for work being the poor man's maintenance, idleness in him is the same thing as extravagance in the rich: one destroys the substance of the poor as effectually as the other does the substance of the rich.

That the young and the old, whose years render them incapable of taking care of themselves; that the impotent and lame, who have not only the necessities, but the miseries of life to struggle with; that the diseased in body and mind, who want either strength or reason to direct it to any useful purposes, are all fit objects of Christian charity and compassion, is too well known to be insisted on. These calamities, which are incident to human life, and are not always the consequences of vice and immorality, but come either in the course of nature, or are sent by the secret disposition of the Almighty, what are they, but the voice of Providence, the hand of God demanding charity?

To direct you to the proper methods of charity, in regard to the several objects described, that the offering of an honest heart may not be lost through misapplication, would be a useful, were it a necessary part of this day's work: but behold, these objects are all before you, and the reports now to be read of the charitable institutions of this ancient and worthy city, will show you in what hands you may safely trust whatever your heart inclines you to offer to God for the relief of the miserable.

Here the report was read.

You have had now the state of these charities set before you; you see how usefully their revenue is applied, and yet how short it falls of the several occasions. It remains on my part, that, for the encouragement of your liberality, I should speak to the last thing proposed, namely,

What is the blessing and reward attending on the faithful discharge of this duty: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

The time already spent admonishes me to be short. In a word then: if you compare the conditions into which men are divided, and the several duties; if you consider the obligation the rich are under to assist the needy, and compare it with the much harder obligation the poor are under to toil for a mean livelihood; you will have reason to bless God, who has placed you on the happier side, and to comply with the duty of your station with all thankfulness to the Almighty, and to acknowlege that he has chosen for you the better part; and if you discharge the duties proper to your condition, you may have this comfort added to it, it shall not be taken from you.

Secondly, in regard to the present pleasure and satisfaction attending on works of charity, the giver has in all respects a better share than the receiver. The poor man has a present comfort in the relief of charity; it is ease to his suffering, and it is an encouragement to see that his poverty is not despised by his richer neighbors, who are so compassionate as to come to the support and assistance of it. But what is this to the joy of giving ease and comfort to the oppressed; it is a godlike virtue to do good, and the pleasure of it has something in it so divine, that words cannot express. To 'be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, to be a father to the poor,' and a defender of all under oppression, are characters which bear some resemblance to the prerogatives of the Almighty, and are the noblest efforts of a rational mind, aspiring to be like its great Creator.

Thirdly, if we look beyond this present scene, the difference is wider. There is no virtue in being relieved; a poor man is not a better man for the charity he receives; it brings with it an increase of duty, and calls on him for a more sure trust on God, for greater thankfulness to him; and some obligations it lays him under with respect to his benefactors here. And it may happen that the charity, which is his present relief, may be a burden on his future account; and will be so if he misapplies the gift. But the giver has a better prospect before him: charity is the discharge of a duty, and has the general promises of obedience; it is a virtue likewise distinguished from the rest, and has its own reward; the blessings of the life which is, and of that which is to come: it is a debt which God will own at the last day; it is a treasure transferred to

heaven, and will be repaid in never failing riches. To conclude, charity is a double maintenance; it gives temporal life to the poor, and spiritual life to the rich: it bestows the comforts of this world on the receiver, and the glories of immortality on the giver.

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE IX.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XVIII.—VERSES 29. 30.

WHEN we consider the various distresses under which many persons and families labor, and their utter inability to support themselves under these evils, it is some alleviation to observe the diligence of Christian charity in finding proper methods for the comfort and support of such objects.

This thought arises naturally from the business of the day. Series of observations made on the present assembly; on the manner in which men oppress the poor and miserable; particularly in the case to which the text refers; that is, the hard-hearted cruelty exercised towards insolvent debtors. Consideration of what reason, conscience, and Christian charity require of us in this case. Observations on the words of our Saviour's parable in the text.

First; here is a debt supposed to be justly due. The poor man owed his fellow-servant an hundred pence.

Secondly; when the debt is demanded, he does not deny it or refuse to pay it, but desires forbearance only, till by his labor he could discharge it.

Thirdly; he asks even this as a favor, and with great submission. On the contrary,

Fourthly; the creditor with insolence and violence demands the debt; for which behavior he is called, (ver. 32.) *Thou wicked servant.*

Some of these circumstances seem to be added, in order to aggravate the cruelty of this wicked servant; as the violence

used on the one side, and the submission made on the other. And the case commonly falls out to be so.

But the circumstances on which the reason of the case depends are principally two: first, that the debtor was not able to discharge the debt at the time of the demand: secondly, that he was willing to do justice to his creditor, and to endeavor, by the best means in his power, to raise a sum which might answer the demand. Therefore where either of these circumstances are wanting, the reason of the case ceases, and together with it all pleas for compassion and forbearance: this point enlarged on.

Another circumstance, on which the judgment of our Saviour in this case depends, is, that there be a readiness and willingness in the debtor to do justice whenever he is able, and to use his best endeavors for that purpose: consequently all such debtors are out of this case who deny their just debts, or any part of them; or who conceal their effects to defraud their creditors; also such as live idly and profusely on the estate which ought to be applied to do justice to whom it is due. The reason of these exceptions given in each case.

In these therefore, and others of the like nature, a good man may, and a wise man will, make use of the power which the law gives him for the security of his property.

But when the circumstances mentioned in the text meet together; when the debtor is chargeable with no fraud or fault, but is disabled by mere poverty from discharging his debts, to use the extremity of the law against such a man is not only cruel and inhuman, but contrary to the true meaning and design of the law: this point enlarged on.

Is it then a general rule that the law can never with good conscience be executed against insolvent debtors? There may possibly be many exceptions; but they must all be attended with this circumstance, that there be a prospect of recovering the debt, though the debtor be insolvent: this point explained.

Some think that no severity is too great to be used against those who have spent their estates riotously, to the injury of their creditor; and indeed little is to be said in behalf of such persons. Yet still it is worth consideration, whether a man would choose to be judge and executioner in his own cause.

But the case which is now principally in view, stands clear of these exceptions. Those unfortunate persons with whom the jails are crowded, are for the most part such as have neither money nor friends to assist them; such as have fallen into poverty by misfortunes, by a decay of business, or perhaps by the numbers of a family which their utmost diligence could not support. Were they at liberty, they might be of use to themselves, to their poor families, and also to their creditors: this case enlarged on: *the report read.* Concluding observations.

DISCOURSE IX.

The case of the Insolvent Debtors, and the charity due to them, considered.—Preached before the Lord Mayor, &c. at St. Bride's, on Monday in Easter week, April 22, 1728.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XVIII.—VERSES 29. 30.

And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.
And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

When we consider the various calamities and distresses under which many persons and families labor, and their utter inability to support themselves under these evils, it is some alleviation to observe with what diligence and application Christian charity has been at work to find proper methods for the comfort and support of such as are in misery and affliction.

This thought arises naturally from the business of this day. And surely this great and worthy city never appears more honorable in the sight of God and man, than when assembled for the sake and on the behalf of those who have nothing to plead for them but their misery; and nothing to return but their prayers.

As the charitable institutions under your direction and government have no use of riches or possessions but for the supply of the needy; the true way of estimating their condition is, to consider the proportion which their revenues bear to the

necessities of those who stand in need of their assistance. If the poor thrive and grow able to support themselves, the hospitals grow rich in proportion; if the poor and their wants increase, the hospitals themselves grow poor, and become the object of every Christian's charity.

From hence it is evident, that whoever, by any methods of oppression or cruelty, adds to the number of the poor and miserable, does as truly act in opposition to these charitable foundations, and the end for which they are instituted, as if he took from them their possessions. For whether you increase their burden, or lessen their maintenance, it is the same thing.

There are few who will suspect themselves to be chargeable with any design against these charities; and there are, I believe, few indeed who have any formed design against them. But if you consider the case in the view now opened to you, it may appear perhaps that there are many who act daily in opposition to this good work, increasing that burden, which is already almost insupportable.

There are many ways which men practise in oppressing the poor, which might properly fall under this consideration; but I shall confine myself to that single instance, to which the text relates, the hardheartedness and cruelty which men use towards their poor insolvent debtors. And I the rather choose to speak to this case, because men are apt to imagine that conscience has nothing to do in it, and that they are secure from any guilt so long as they follow in a legal manner the method prescribed by the law. Perhaps too, for a like reason, this iniquity has been less reproved than it deserves by the preacher; for fear he should be thought to condemn the law of his country.

I have no such fear; nor do I mean to condemn the law of my country, or to charge it with the cruelty of those who abuse it. If the law itself is severe, the more reason there is to be cautious in the use of it: but if men will turn the law, which was given them for the security of their property, into an instrument of oppression and revenge, the law is free, but they are guilty. And without doubt there have been many legal proceedings in courts of justice, which, when they come to be

re-examined in a higher court, the judge and the jury shall be praised for executing the law faithfully, and yet the prosecutor condemned for violence and oppression.

There is a plain difference between the laws made for the public good and safety, and those introduced in favor of private persons; only with respect to the first-mentioned laws, it is often criminal to conceal offences committed against them, or to compound for them with the offenders. To conceal treason is an offence of a very high nature; for every man is concerned in the life and welfare of the king, and bound to defend him. To compound with thieves and robbers is criminal, for this plain reason among others, that whoever treats with a thief for his impunity, treats for a greater interest than he has a right to dispose of; for every man has an interest in bringing such offenders to justice; and therefore no man can remit the penalty but he who has a right to act for the public, that is, the king only.

But as to the laws introduced for the sake of private rights and properties, the case is otherwise. For as every man may dispose of his own rights and properties as he thinks fit, so he is at liberty to use the methods which the law has provided for the recovery of his rights, or not to use them, as he pleases. In all these cases therefore the law provides the remedy, and leaves the use of it to the conscience of the party concerned.

Since then men are to be governed by the rules of reason and conscience in the legal prosecution of their own rights, I desire you to consider with me what it is that reason and conscience and Christian charity require of us in the case now under consideration.

The words of the text are part of one of our Saviour's parables. They do not contain an historical account of a fact, supposed to have happened just as it is related; but here is a case stated by our blessed Lord, with such circumstances as he thought proper to support the inference to be drawn from it; and therefore the circumstances are to be considered as necessary ingredients in the judgment which he makes on this case. Observe then,

First, here is a debt supposed to be justly due. The poor man owed his fellow-servant an hundred pence.

Secondly, when the debt is demanded, he does not deny it, or refuse to pay it, but desires forbearance only till he could, by his labor and industry, raise enough to discharge the debt.

Thirdly, he asks even this as a favor, and with great submission: he fell down at his fellow-servant's feet and besought him. On the contrary,

Fourthly, the creditor comes with insolence and violence to demand his debt. 'He laid hands on his fellow-servant,' and 'took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.' And when the poor man besought him to have patience, he regarded him not, but hurried him away to prison; and for this behavior he is called, ver. 32. 'Thou wicked servant.'

Some of these circumstances seem to be added, to aggravate the cruelty of this wicked servant; such are they which describe the violence used on one side, and the submission and intreaty offered on the other. And the case commonly falls out to be so. Men are apt to demand their debts, especially from their equals or inferiors, with a haughtiness and roughness hard to be borne; and yet the poor debtor is forced by necessity to take it patiently, and to be all submission.

But the circumstances on which the reason of the case depends, are principally these two: first, that the debtor was not able to discharge the debt at the time of the demand: secondly, that he was willing to do justice to his creditor, and to endeavor, by the best means he could use, to raise a sum sufficient to answer the demand. Therefore where either of these circumstances are wanting, the reason of the case ceases, and together with it all pleas for forbearance and compassion. Consequently every man is at liberty, in point of conscience, to use the method which the law of his country directs; to compel those to pay their debts who are able, but not willing to pay them. And in truth where this is the case, the creditor is so far from being justly chargeable with cruelty or oppression in making use of any legal method to recover his own, that the charge lies strongly against the other side. To delay poor traders or others in the payment of what is due to them, is always injustice, and sometimes very barbarous injustice. A poor man may perhaps lose his credit, which is the life of his business, or perhaps his liberty, which is the life

and maintenance of himself and family, for want of that very money which you detain from him: and when this happens, is it any compensation to pay the man at last what is owing to him? So far from it, that such a debtor, even when his debt is paid, may stand charged in conscience with the ruin of a poor family.

Another circumstance on which the judgment of our Saviour in this case depends, is, that there be a readiness and willingness in the debtor to do justice whenever he is able, and to use his best endeavors to enable himself to do it. Consequently all such debtors are out of this case who deny their just debts, or any part of them; and all such as may be justly suspected to conceal their effects in order to defraud their creditors; and such also as live idly and profusely, squandering the estate which ought to be applied to do justice to those to whom it is due. The reason of these exceptions may be made plain in few words. The present inability of a debtor is the argument for the delay and the forbearance; but this inability comes not into question where the debt itself is denied. And since the circumstances of men change so fast as they do, the man who wants forbearance this year, may in a few more be better able to pay the debt than the other is to forgive it; and what reason can be given why he should not? Now he who denies the debt, declares an intention never to pay it; which certainly will justify the other in endeavoring, by a legal method, to maintain and ascertain his right; and till the right is cleared, there is no room for one side to plead, or the other side to consider the arguments for pity and compassion.

The second exception relates to a case which is so manifestly fraudulent, that nothing can be said in its excuse. They who conceal their effects, and plead poverty deceitfully, are mere cheats, and deserve no compassion. To prevent such frauds, and to arm the creditor with power to compel a discovery, seems to me to be the chief view and design of the law, which puts the body of the debtor into the creditor's power; and so odious is this deceit, that the law, in some cases and circumstances, has annexed to it a far greater penalty.

The third exception relates to those who oftentimes are free enough of their promises to do justice, and yet by their actions

declare daily that they have nothing less at heart than to do justly by their creditors. Such are they who live idly and profusely, and are constantly diminishing what they have, and by so doing are rendering themselves less able every day to pay their just debts. Now what reason can you imagine, that is proper to be laid before an honest industrious man, to persuade him to be content that his own family should suffer, and his substance be wasted by the folly and extravagance of a stranger? Such a man would certainly punish and restrain a son of his own, were he idle and extravagant; and what kind of goodness or charity is it to maintain and support the like extravagance in another? Some wise commonwealths have debarred such persons from the management of their own estates: I am sure there is more reason to debar them from spending the estates of other men; and this is what every extravagant man does, whilst he consumes his substance, and leaves his debts unpaid.

In these cases, therefore, and in others of the like nature, every good man may, and every wise man will, make use (in a reasonable manner) of the power which the law gives him for the security of his property; and in so doing he stands clear of all offence against charity and good conscience.

But when the circumstances mentioned in the text meet together; when the debtor is chargeable with no fault or fraud, but is disabled by mere poverty to satisfy his debts; to use the extremity of the law against such a man is not only cruel and inhuman, but, as far as I can judge, contrary to the true meaning and design of the law itself. For the law which gives power over the body of the debtor, is not a criminal law, ordained for the punishment of offenders; but is a law made to secure men in their properties, and to guard them against the arts and contrivances of such as would injure them in their just demands. To use the law therefore, where it cannot possibly have any effect towards securing your property, but can serve only to harass and torment a poor unfortunate man, is perverting the law, and making it subservient to purposes very different from those for the sake of which it was ordained. The law does not intrust private men with the execution or relaxation of its penalties for crimes and offences; but in the present case

every man may imprison, or release from prison, his debtor, as he pleases; a plain evidence that this law was meant as a defence of private rights, and not as a punishment for criminals.

Is it then a general rule that the law can never with good conscience be executed against insolvent debtors? There may possibly be exceptions, and more than I can foresee; but I think they must all be attended with this circumstance, that there be a prospect of recovering the debt, though the debtor himself be insolvent. It may so happen that he who has nothing of his own, may have wealthy friends and relations; and though friends are not often willing, for the sake of justice, to pay the debts of a relation, yet for the honor of the family, or out of personal regard to the relation, they will pay the money as the price of his redemption from a jail. Many cases may be imagined, where a rich relation ought in reason to pay the debt, rather than the poor creditor to lose it. In such cases, there may be a reason to justify or excuse the proceeding.

Some think that no severity is too great to be used towards such as have spent their estates riotously, to the injury of their creditors. And indeed little is to be said in behalf of such persons. Yet still it is worth considering whether you would choose to be judge and executioner in your own cause. And if the case be really so desperate, that you can aim at nothing by the execution of the law but the punishment of the man who has wronged you, I am sure it is the safer way to leave the punishment to him who has said, 'Vengeance is mine, and I will repay.'

But the case which I have principally in view stands clear of these exceptions. The unfortunate persons with whom the jails are crowded, are for the most part such as have neither money nor friends to assist them; such as have fallen into poverty by misfortunes, by a decay in their business, or perhaps by the largeness of a family, which their utmost diligence could not support. Were they at liberty, they might probably be of use to themselves and their poor families, and also to their creditors, by following their honest callings and employments. But now their strength consumes in vain, they starve in prison, and their children out of it, or are thrown on the parish for a

miserable maintenance; and no benefit or advantage accrues, or can possibly accrue, to the person who confines them.

Men are often urged to deal thus severely with others, by the grief and anguish which attend the disappointment they meet with in their just expectation; and being themselves sufferers, they think no treatment too bad for those to whom they impute their own distress. But could men consider calmly how much misery they bring into the world, and how many must partake in the sad effects of their resentment, I am persuaded that humanity and compassion, virtues to which this country never was a stranger, would in great measure prevent this evil.

When the father of a poor family, who have nothing to depend on for their subsistence but his labor and industry, is torn from them, what can the poor widow and orphans do? For a widow *she is*, and orphans *they are*, to all the intents and purposes of sorrow and affliction. It is well if they take no worse employment than begging; oftentimes they are tempted to pilfer or steal, or to prostitute themselves for bread; and happy is it for them, if they meet with no worse fortune than to fall into your hands to be corrected and reformed.

In the mean time the wretched father sees himself undone, and his family dispersed and ruined. His spirits sink under sorrow, and despair eats out his strength and life; that should you in time relent and release him, it is ten to one but the relief comes too late. He is no longer the same man; before his imprisonment he was active and strong, and had spirit to go through his labor; now he is broken in mind and body, and not able to improve to any advantage that liberty which at last you are willing to allow him.

Would not any one who considers this, be apt to imagine that no man lies in prison but for some great debt; that it is impossible that any one should use another thus cruelly for a trifle? And yet, in truth, the case is quite otherwise: there are few, in comparison, who lie for great sums; the far greater number are confined for trifles, for such sums as must be reckoned by pence, and not by pounds. It is true they are commonly confined at the suit of those who are almost as poor as themselves; and the poverty on the one side is often urged as a justification of the severity used against the other. But alas!

what relief is it to one poor man to undo another? What comfort is it to torment a wretch whose misery can yield you no profit or advantage?

Whether I have justly represented the consequences of this case or no, you, who have the poor orphans of this city under your care, and you, whose charitable work it is to correct and reform the vicious and profligate, are best able to say; for you know all the distresses of the poor, and the causes from whence they spring; and, to your honor I speak it, you have provided for every evil of life a proper remedy or a proper comfort. But I need not be your orator; your own deeds will speak for you far better than I can. The report now to be read will show both the nature and the good management of the several charities under your direction.

Here the report was read.

The account now laid before you is capable of raising very different sentiments in the heart of a Christian. It is a melancholy thing to hear the poor orphans in one place, the profligate vagrants in another, the lame and impotent in a third, and the distempered in mind in a fourth, reckoned up by hundreds and by thousands. To what miseries is human life exposed!

But still, in the midst of these calamities, there is reason to bless and adore the goodness of God, who has put it into the hearts of his servants to provide comfort and relief for these sons and daughters of affliction.

The richest among us, when he views these misfortunes, sees nothing but what he is liable to himself. Examine the condition of these orphans, many of them perhaps born in the midst of plenty, though now they live on charity. There was a time perhaps when *their* fathers as little thought they should be beholden to an hospital for the maintenance of their children as we may think it at this day.

Other calamities make no distinction between rich and poor; we have no inheritance in the use of our limbs and senses, but enjoy them by the good pleasure of him who gave them. And whenever these misfortunes overtake us, our riches make but little difference in the case: a rich distracted man and a poor distracted man are very near on an equality; and as far as

the power of imagination goes, they often change conditions; the poor man fancying himself to be a prince, whilst the rich one pines and torments himself with the all-fears and anxieties of poverty.

Since then you are so nearly related to all the miseries now placed within your view, need I say much to move tenderness and compassion towards a case already so much your own? This is a cause which nature will plead for in every heart not made of stone. But there is one still greater Advocate to plead this cause, even he who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. These orphans, these diseased in body or in mind, nay, even the profligate wretches who are brought to you for punishment and correction, are his care; and whatever charity you bestow on them, he will reckon it as done to himself, and acknowlege it in the sight of men and of angels, when he shall come again to judge the world in righteousness.

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE X.

MARK, CHAP. III.—VERSE 24.

THOUGH the words of the text are read in the gospel, yet they have not their authority merely from thence; since an appeal lies to common sense and experience for the truth contained in them.

As observations of this kind depend on a great number of facts, so are there in the present case a great number to support it. We have examples of our own growth.

The late unhappy times of Charles the First were attended with this peculiar felicity, that no foreign nation was at leisure to take advantage of our divisions. But though there was no such enemy to ruin us, yet ruined we were. Such is the malignity of intestine division!

When national quarrels grow extreme, and appear in arms, it is easy to foresee their sad consequences; and whoever looks back with partial or impartial eye on the years of distress under which this country labored in the late times, will see enough to convince him how fatal a thing it is for a kingdom to be divided against itself: it will be therefore of little use to enlarge on this part of the argument.

But there are other evils less discernible, which spring from the same bitter root, and naturally prepare a way for the greater mischiefs which follow.

National divisions are sometimes founded in material differences, sometimes owe their rise to accidents; but all divisions, how different soever in their commencement, grow in their progress to be much alike; and there are evil effects which may

generally be ascribed to them all, as the fruit they naturally produce.

I. The zeal and warmth which attend public quarrels, are apt to get possession of men's minds and affections so far as to render them in great measure unable to form a right judgment of things and persons; and without this it is impossible for men to be of any service to their country; since a foundation for public good can never be laid in a wrong judgment of things and persons: this topic fully treated.

II. One great guard to virtue, and placed in the minds of men by the hand that formed them, is the sense of shame when we do ill; of the same kind, and a twin of the same birth, is the pleasure arising from the praise of having done well: but to make these natural passions of any service to us, they must be kept true to their proper objects, good and evil; and whenever the judgment is so corrupted as to lose sight of this difference, the love of praise and the fear of shame will become not merely useless, but mischievous and destructive; which must be the case when a false standard is set up. This applied to a nation or kingdom divided against itself.

III. When praise and reproaches are distributed with so little justice, it has another very ill effect in hardening men against reproach, even when they deserve it most: this point enlarged on.

IV. It is a farther aggravation of this evil, to consider that such infamous conduct seldom fails of being successful; for when the malignity of intestine division is far spread, it becomes a shelter for all iniquity: party zeal usurps the place of Christian charity, and covers a multitude of sins: men then trust their hopes and fortunes to the merit of their zeal, and this seldom fails them; for,

V. As credit and reputation, the natural rewards of virtue, are perverted and misapplied by the blind spirit of division, so are the rewards which the public has provided and destined to

the encouragement of true merit, diverted into a wrong channel: this point enlarged on.

These are the steps by which division corrupts the manners and morality of a nation. And what hopes are there of seeing a people grow great and considerable, who have lost the sense of virtue and of shame; who call evil good, and good evil; and who are prepared to sacrifice their true interest and that of their country to their own and their leaders' resentment?

These general observations might be justified by numberless instances, drawn from the late times; but to do justice to the subject and the solemn occasion of the day, it is necessary to take one step into their history, and to view the works of division in its utmost rage.

It is difficult to speak of any thing relating to the unhappy period which this day calls to mind, and truth can hardly be borne on either side; yet testimony must be given against the unnatural and barbarous treason, and the acts of violence which prepared the way for it; a treason long since condemned by the public voice.

The subject illustrated by some examples, which the history of the late times affords, and which reach to the full extent of the text, that *a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.*

To put a stop to innovations, correct abuses, and redress grievances by the known rules of Parliament, is the true and ancient method of preserving the constitution, and transmitting it safe to posterity; but when this wholesome physic came to be administered by the spirit of faction and division, it was so intemperately given, that the remedy inflamed the distemper, and the unhappy contest which began about the rights of the king and the liberties of the people ended in the destruction of both.

The contest about civil rights was rendered exceedingly hot and fierce, by having all the disputes and quarrels in religious matters, under which the nation had long suffered, incorporated

with it: thus conscience was called in to animate and inflame the popular resentments: the effect was soon felt, for the church of England fell the first sacrifice.

The bishops of those days were generally inclined to save and support the crown; the consequence thence drawn was, that episcopacy itself was an usurpation; and the bishops were excluded, not only from the House of Parliament, but from their churches also.

But why mention this, when so much more fatal a blow was given to the liberties and constitution of England, by the House of Lords itself being declared useless, and the peerage excluded from a share in the legislature?

The nobility were not free from the infection of those times; and yet to their honor be it remembered, that the execrable act of this day could not be carried into execution so long as the peerage of England had any influence in the government: when once they were removed, the crown and the head of him that wore it fell together.

It is said that very few persons comparatively were wicked and bold enough to dip their hands in royal blood. But then, how fatal to kingdoms is the spirit of faction and division, which could in the course of a few years throw all the powers of the kingdom into the hands of a few desperate men, and enable them to trample on the heads of princes, the honors of the nobility, and the liberties of the people!

Could these acts of violence, and the causes which produced them, be suffered to lie quiet in history, as so many beacons, we might be wiser and better for the calamities of our fathers; but if we permit their passions and resentments to descend on us; if we keep alive old quarrels by mutual invectives, what else are we doing but nursing up the embers of that fire which once consumed these kingdoms?

The application of what has been said is so natural and ob-

vious, that were it pardonable to omit it on this occasion, it would not be mentioned.

There is no pleasure in viewing the follies and distractions of former times; nor is there any advantage, unless it be that we may grow better and wiser by the examples which history sets before us. In the present case we have the experience, which cost the nation dear, to warn both rulers and subjects how carefully they should avoid all occasions of division. The true way to act is, for each side to maintain its own rights without encroaching on those of the other; for the constitution must suffer whenever the rights of the crown, or the liberties of the people, are invaded: this point enlarged on. Concluding observations.

DISCOURSE X.

Preached before the House of Lords at Westminster Abbey, Jan. 30, 1733.

MARK, CHAP. III.—VERSE 24.

If a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

THOUGH these words are read in the gospel, yet they have not their authority merely from thence; but for the truth of the observation contained in them, there lies an appeal to common sense and experience. Our Saviour indeed, by using this maxim, has approved it; and he could not appeal to the judgment of all men in this case, without, at the same time, declaring his own.

As observations of this kind depend on a great number of facts, so are there in the present case a great number to support it. The many kingdoms and countries weakened or ruined by intestine divisions, are so many proofs on record of the truth of this assertion. And did we of this country want to have this truth cleared by such instances, it would be but reasonable to produce the proofs. But we have examples of our own growth, and stand in need of no assistance from foreign history. This island has often changed its inhabitants; but the new ones never got possession till the old ones made way for them by their mutual hatred and animosities; and the nation has, under very unpromising circumstances, maintained itself against foreign enemies, whenever it was so happy as to preserve peace and tranquillity at home.

The late unhappy times of Charles the First were attended

with this almost peculiar felicity, that no foreign nation was at leisure to take advantage of our divisions. Europe was in arms; and the great powers too much in awe of each other, for any one to conceive hopes of success, had his ambition inclined him to lay hold of the opportunities which our distractions offered. But though there was no enemy to ruin us, yet ruined we were. Such is the malignity of intestine division!

When national quarrels grow extreme, and appear in arms, it is easy to foresee the sad consequences; and the coldest imagination may be able to paint to itself the miseries that must follow. And whoever looks back on the many years of distress under which this country labored in the late times; let him view them with impartial or with partial eye; will see enough to convince his judgment how fatal a thing it is for a kingdom to be divided against itself. It will therefore be of little use to enlarge on this part of the argument; and I the more willingly pass it over, as it will save you and me the pain of viewing various scenes of woe, which that time, fruitful in misery, would present before us.

But there are other evils, less discernible, which spring from the same bitter root, and naturally prepare the way for the greater mischiefs to follow after: they are the first symptoms of public confusion; and as they influence greatly the virtue and morality of a nation, they are in a more especial manner the preacher's care.

National divisions are sometimes founded in material differences, such as affect the well-being and constitution of a government; and sometimes owe their rise to accidents, and trifles unworthy of the concern of the public. In this respect therefore every case must stand on its own bottom, and is subject to no general observation. But all divisions, how different soever in their commencement, grow in their progress to be so much alike; partly from the common depravity of men, who have not virtue enough to act honestly in an honest cause; partly from the cunning of designing men, who seldom want the art to direct the public dispute to the service of their private views; that there are evil effects which may be generally ascribed to all divisions, as the fruit which they naturally produce.

I. The zeal and warmth which attend public quarrels, are apt to get possession of men's minds and affections so far as to render them in great measure unable to form a right judgment of things and persons.

Without a right judgment in these respects, it is impossible for men to be of any service to their country. For a foundation for public good can never be laid in a wrong judgment of things and persons. And yet, when contentions run high, so hard is it even for the coolest heads to form right judgments, that it is hardly possible for them to get right information in any thing: the very language of the country is perverted by the zeal of parties; honor and honesty are words which lose their natural meaning, and become merely relative to the notions of him who uses them; and when a person is represented to us under these fair and engaging characters, nothing can be certainly concluded, but that the man so highly praised and his orator are both of aside.

With as little justice are terms of reproach dealt about, though commonly with a more liberal hand, as the resentments of anger and contempt are usually keener and more active than those of love and esteem. Men of discernment on all sides see the folly and iniquity of this practice; yet they carry on the work, without giving credit to themselves, for the sake of the multitude, who are greatly influenced, and often prepared for mischief, by these devices. If we look into the large list of malignants, delinquents, and persons suspected, or perhaps without suspicion, charged as papists in the late times, we shall find among them some of the wisest and best of the nation; who, could they have had the influence in public affairs which their worth and merit intitled them to, would have saved both their king and their country from oppression. But these men were made useless: and in like circumstances the best men will always be so; for it must ever be their choice rather to sink under such artifices, than to thrive by the use of them; and the times leave them no other choice.

As it is with persons, so it is with things. To see how obstinately and perversely men approve or disapprove almost every thing by the vitiated taste of party, one would think that truth

and reason had left the world, or that men were universally fallen blind. But neither have truth and reason left the world, nor are men otherwise than wilfully blind. But when the appeal is made, as in popular cases it is, to the multitude, the leaders find it much easier to direct their passions than their understandings. And what reason is there to expect that men should take the direction of their own eyes, when they refer themselves to the opinion and approbation of those who have none?

This blind attachment to things and persons tends gradually to destroy the very notions of right and wrong, and to render virtue and common honesty of little or no significancy in public affairs. The lower part of the world soon grows to be insensible of the difference; and by a habit of following a false rule of judging, they become incapable of making use of the true one. And when designing men observe that by doing right they cannot please their adversaries, by doing wrong they cannot offend their friends, they will soon disregard a distinction of so little use either to their interest or reputation. And hence proceeds that hardness of mind, which no reason, no conviction can subdue.

How fatal an influence this must have on the virtue and morality of any people, will appear by following this evil a few steps farther into some of its natural and obvious consequences.

II. One great guard to virtue, and placed in the minds of men by the hand that formed them, is the sense of shame when we do ill; of the same kind, and a twin of the same birth, is the pleasure arising from the praise of having done well. When men, through the corruptness of their own hearts, get rid of these natural impressions, they are, in the opinion of the world, profligate and abandoned. Of this kind the instances are but few. But then, to make their natural passions of any service to us, they must be kept true to their proper objects, good and evil; and whenever the judgment is so corrupted as to lose sight of this difference, the love of praise and the fear of shame will become not merely useless, but mischievous and destructive. And this must be the case whenever a false standard of reputation is set up. And when a nation or kingdom is divided,

honor and reputation will be dealt out by a false measure, and fall to their share who are best able or most forward to serve and promote the measures of the intemperate zeal, which possesses the one or the other part of the division. Thus true honor and virtue are robbed of their natural forces; and the sense of shame and of praise are seduced into the service of a faction; and so far perverted, as oftentimes to prove motives to actions base and dishonorable.

III. When praise and reproaches are distributed with so little justice, it has another very ill effect in hardening men against reproach, even when they deserve it most. Reproach, when it falls indiscriminately on the best and the worst, loses its proper effect; and bad men will take advantage of the ill judgment of the world in abusing the best, to despise all censure, how justly soever passed on themselves. This will by degrees make men insensible of the pleasure of doing brave and generous actions for the good of their country; they will grow steeled and obdurate in their minds, and with a profligate contempt of the opinion of the world, enter calmly and without remorse into any mischief, to which interest, revenge, or any other mean passion shall invite them.

IV. It is a farther aggravation of this evil to consider that this infamous conduct seldom fails of being successful. When the malignity of intestine division is far spread, it becomes a shelter for all iniquity. Party zeal usurps the place of Christian charity, and covers a multitude of sins. And when once men find that there is so short a way to credit and esteem, they will be tempted, through laziness and a natural depravity, which will be ever ready to lay hold on such encouragement, to decline the honorable and laborious methods of rising to reputation in the world, and to trust their hopes and their fortunes to the merit of their zeal; which hopes seldom fail them. For,

V. As credit and reputation, the natural rewards of virtue, are perverted and misapplied by the blind spirit of division, so are the rewards which the public has provided and destined to the encouragement of true merit, diverted into a wrong channel: the worthiest are often driven into obscurity, and others

called into employments and preferments in which they can do themselves no honor, their country no service.

There is not a place in church or state of so mean a consideration, but that the public has an interest in having it supplied by a proper, and, in proportion to the duty of the office, an able man. When this is the case, the work of government is carried on regularly and steadily, and the influences of it are duly communicated and felt in every part; as the blood, which moves from the heart, cherishes and warms the extreme parts of the body, as long as the little vessels which convey it are in due order; but if these small channels are obstructed, or lose their proper tone, coldness and numbness will ensue, and sometimes greater evils, not to be borne, nor to be cured but by the loss of a limb.

These are the steps by which division corrupts the manners and morality of a nation. And what hopes are there of seeing a people grow great and considerable, who have lost not only the sense of virtue, but even the sense of shame; who call evil good, and good evil; and are prepared to sacrifice their reason, their true interest, the peace and prosperity of their country, to their own and their leaders' resentments? Can it be expected that men should form themselves by a virtuous and laborious course of life for the service of a country, where real worth and merit are so far out of consideration, that the affections and regards of the people are tied, like the favor of the Roman circus, to the color of the coat which distinguishes their faction?

These general observations, which I have laid before you, might be justified by numberless instances drawn from the history of the late times; but perhaps they may weigh more standing single by themselves, than being coupled with facts, in which the passions of the present age are not unconcerned. And sufficient they are of themselves to warn all honest men how they begin or foment the divisions of their country.

But yet, to do justice to my subject, and the solemn occasion of this day, it is necessary to take one step into the history of former times, and to view the works of division in its utmost rage.

I am sensible how difficult it is to speak of any thing relating to that unhappy time which this day calls to mind, and how hardly truth can be borne on any side; yet shall not this discourage me from bearing my testimony against the unnatural and barbarous treason of this day, and the acts of violence which prepared the way for it: a treason long since condemned by the public voice of the nation, in the most solemn acts of Church and State.

I shall go on therefore to illustrate my subject by some examples which the history of the late times affords, and which will reach to the full extent of the observation of my text, that 'a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.'

To put a stop to innovations, to correct the errors or abuses in government, to redress the grievances of the people by the known rules of parliament, is the true and ancient method of preserving the constitution, and transmitting it safe with all its advantages to posterity. But when this wholesome physic came to be administered, as at length it did, by the spirit of faction and division, it was so intemperately given, that the remedy inflamed the distemper; and the unhappy contest, which began about the rights of the king, and the liberties of the people, ended fatally in the destruction of both.

The contest about civil rights was rendered exceedingly hot and fierce, by having all the disputes and quarrels in religious matters, under which the nation had long suffered, incorporated with it. By this means conscience was called in to animate and inflame the popular resentments. The effect was soon felt: the church of England, which had long been the glory and the bulwark of the Reformation, fell the first sacrifice; and many who had served long and faithfully at her altars, were driven out to seek their bread in desolate places. What came in the room of the church so destroyed, time would fail me, should I pretend to account; so many and so various were the forms of religion which arose out of the imaginations of men set free from government.

The bishops of those days were generally inclined to save and support the crown. The consequence drawn from thence was, that episcopacy itself was a usurpation. My meaning is not, that this argument was ever used in the form of logic to

convince any man's judgment; but it influenced the affections of thousands, and prevailed so far as to exclude the bishops not only from this house, where they had sat from the earliest foundation of the monarchy; but from their churches also, where they had been received and reverenced as rulers and governors, for as many ages as can be counted from the days of the apostles.

But why do I mention the exclusion of the bishops from the House of Lords, when so much more fatal a blow was given to the liberties and constitution of England, by declaring the House of Lords itself to be useless, and excluding the peerage from a share in the legislature; a right derived to them through a long series of ancestors from time immemorial.

The nobility were not free from the infection of those times; and yet to their honor be it remembered, that the execrable fact of this day could not be carried into execution so long as the peerage of England had any influence in the government. But when once they were removed, and this last support of the sinking crown taken away, the crown and the head that wore it fell a victim to the rage of desperate and merciless men.

It is said, (and the partiality I have for the honor of my country makes me willingly repeat it,) that few, very few in comparison, were wicked enough and bold enough to dip their hands in royal blood. But then how fatal to kingdoms is the spirit of faction and division, which could in the course of a few years throw all the powers of the kingdom into the hands of a few desperate men, and enable them to trample under foot the crowns and the heads of princes, the rights and honors of the ancient nobility, the liberties and properties of a free people, and to tear up the very foundations of our once happy and envied constitution!

Could these acts of violence, and the causes which produced them, be suffered to lie quiet in history as so many marks to point out to us the rocks and shelves on which our fathers made shipwreck, we their sons might be the wiser and the better for their calamities. But if we permit their passions and resentments to descend on us; if we keep the old quarrels alive by mutual reproaches and invectives, what else are we doing but nursing up the embers of that fire which once consumed these

kingdoms, and which may again burst out into a destroying flame? But I forbear, and will forbode no evil to my country.

The application of what has been said is so natural and obvious, that were it pardonable to omit it on this occasion, I should hardly mention it.

There is no pleasure in viewing the follies and distractions of former times; nor is there any advantage, unless it is in order to grow better and wiser by the example which history sets before us. In the present case we have the experience, which cost the nation dear, to warn both rulers and subjects how carefully they should avoid all occasions of division. The true way to do it is, for each side to maintain its own rights without encroaching on those of the other; for the constitution must suffer whenever the rights of the crown or the liberties of the people are invaded. And though every Briton is to be commended if he is fond, and may be indulged when he is over fond (if such a case can be) of the liberties of his country; yet he ought always to remember, that as the people have their liberties, so the king has his rights, which are derived from the same constitution and the same law under which the people claim their liberties: and indeed the people have an interest and inheritance in the rights of the crown, which are so many trusts lodged in the hands of the prince for the defence and protection of the people, and to enable him the better to carry on the necessary works of government.

To conclude: as we have a prince on the throne under whose government, though some have complained, yet none have suffered in the least of their rights by any act of power; who has shown himself not only careful, but even jealous for the liberties of his people; let us in return yield him that share in our hearts and affections which is so justly due to him, and is a recompense the easiest for good subjects to pay, and yet the most valuable that a good prince can receive.

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE XI.

LUKE, CHAP. X.—VERSES 36. 37.

THE case of the good Samaritan was not principally intended to show the necessity of works of mercy, &c.: these have their foundation in, and are recommended by, the law of nature; but to remove various pretences or prejudices was the direct object of our Lord in stating this case: and he was led to this by the inquirer, who admitted the love of our neighbor to be a fundamental duty, though he sought after limitations and restrictions on the practice of it: this point enlarged on. The parable itself is so well known, that it is sufficient to mention the mere circumstances of it.

Taking the direction of our Saviour, as it stands explained by these circumstances, it will lead us to the following considerations: I. the nature and extent of charity: II. the value of the excuses which men often make for the neglect of it: III. the excellency of that particular charity which has given occasion to this day's meeting. First; as was before observed, our Saviour's intention was not principally to show the necessity of charitable works, or to recommend one of them above the rest. In stating a case, however, it was necessary to instance some sort of charitable work; but the conclusion, *Go and do thou likewise*, is not confined to that kind of work only, but is intended to show us who are our neighbors in regard to works of mercy in every kind. The works of mercy are as various as its objects, and all who are miserable are objects of pity; nor can any reason be assigned for excluding such

from our compassion, if we consider ourselves merely in the light of reasonable creatures: this topic enlarged on.

And as the case stands on the ground of reason and the natural sentiments of men, so likewise have the precepts of the gospel bound these duties on us in the same extent.

Honor and reverence are due to those who deserve them; but love is a debt due to all men, which can never be fully paid and exhausted. Therefore St. Paul commands that we *render* to every man *his due*, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor *is due:* but when he speaks of love, he varies his style, and considers us in this respect as debtors to every man: *owe* no man any thing *but to love one another.*

If we consider these laws as derived from the author of nature and of the gospel, we shall find that they proceeded from a love as universal as that which they enjoin; the general good of mankind being provided for in them: this point enlarged on.

The extent of this great duty of love and mercy having been considered, it will be easy, in the second place, to estimate by this measure the value of excuses often made for the neglect of it.

To speak without confusion, it is necessary to distinguish between love as merely a sentiment or habit of the mind, and as coupled with a power and ability to exert itself in external acts of mercy: this subject considered.

Where men are able to practise acts of love and generosity towards others in distress, there is often an unwillingness, and always an excuse to attend it. From what has been said of the duty in general, it is evident that to confine our charity to relations, acquaintance, &c., is inconsistent with the great reasons on which the duty itself is founded, and is therefore a breach of duty which cannot be justified: indeed it is that very pretence which our Saviour intended to exclude and condemn in the parable. But what shall we say to the personal merit

of those who are objects of charity? In the parable the person relieved was a stranger to his benefactor, known to him only by his misery and distress; here therefore personal character had no influence in the charity. And to follow such an example we are exhorted in other places of the gospel. But as no man's ability to do good in any way is unlimited, it is commendable surely to seek for the properest objects of charity; and in this consideration the virtue and innocence of the sufferer must be of great moment.

There would perhaps be little reason to be very nice and curious in the choice of objects, were it not for the many frauds daily practised on well-disposed persons, since begging has become a trade, &c.

Another great discouragement to charitably disposed persons, is the ill use which the poor often make of their benefactions: this point enlarged on.

How to advise charitable persons to steer clear of these inconveniences in their private benevolence, is difficult: perhaps it may be a good rule not to be too curious, or hard to be satisfied. But with respect to the great work of charity connected with the day, this stands free of all such difficulties. This shown; first, from the nature of the charity itself; secondly, from the method in which it is conducted. Concluding exhortation.

DISCOURSE XI.

The nature and extent of charity.—Preached at St. Margaret's, Westminster, before the Trustees of the Infirmary in James Street, April 26, 1735.

LUKE, CHAP. X.—VERSES 36. 37.

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

THE case of the good Samaritan, to which the text has relation, was not principally intended to show the necessity of works of mercy, or to recommend them to the practice of the world: these were points in which our Lord, and the person with whom he discoursed, had no difference. Nor is there in the world any material difference in opinion on this point, as long as the duty is recommended in general propositions, and application is made to the common sentiments of humanity in behalf of the miseries and sufferings of our fellow-creatures. Nor are these sentiments peculiar to Christianity; they have their foundation in nature, and extend as far as reason and sense prevail; and it is to the pen of a heathen we owe that memorable saying, *Homo sum, nihil humanum a me alienum puto.*

But however agreeable these works are to the sense and reason of mankind, whilst they consider them only in general, yet in making the application to particular cases in order to practise, many difficulties are moved; and men, unwilling to undergo the trouble or the expense which attend on works of charity, or lay aside their prejudices and resentments against per-

sons whose misfortunes and calamities have reduced them to be objects of charity, have found out many limitations on these duties; and have let in so many partial considerations and restrictions, that mercy and humanity, which naturally extend to all the world, seldom reach to one country, oftentimes not to all the parts of one family.

To remove these kinds of pretences or prejudices, was the direct view of our Lord in stating the case of the good Samaritan; and the person discoursing with him led him into this consideration, by admitting the love of our neighbor to be a fundamental duty, and immediately inquiring after limitations and restrictions on the practice of the duty. That this was the case will appear on considering the whole passage, of which the text is a part.

At the 25th verse, a lawyer stood up and tempted our Lord, saying, 'Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Our Lord refers him to the law, and asks him what he read there. He answers out of the law—'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.' Our Saviour replies, 'Thou hast answered well; this do, and thou shalt live.' Thus far all was right; and had the inquirer stopped here, we should have had no reason to suspect but that his principles at least were sound and uncorrupt. He had great reason to be satisfied with the answer, when he had received that approbation from our Lord, 'This do, and thou shalt live.' But he goes on, and in the words of the 29th verse it follows, 'But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?' What now is it that he would justify himself from? No charge had been brought against him: so far from it, that our Lord had commended his discreet answer; and if he acted according to the terms he had proposed, our Lord had promised him life. This can be no otherwise accounted for but from the consciousness of the person himself, who knew very well that his practice was not conformable to the general rule he had laid down, and which had been approved and commended by our Lord. Our Saviour's saying to him, 'THIS DO, and thou shalt live,' called him to compare his practice with the rule he had proposed; and on a secret comparison made in his own mind, he

found that, to justify himself, the terms of the rule must be explained and limited; and therefore he says, 'Who is my neighbor?' In the sense of the law, and according to our Saviour's exposition of it, every man who wants our assistance, and whom we are able to assist, is our neighbor, and as such intitled to our good offices. The Jews had some very near neighbors, in the restrained sense of the word, with whom they were so far from entertaining any intercourse of good offices, that all common civilities had ceased among them: those were the Samaritans; and so far were the resentments of the Jews carried, that when our Saviour desired a woman of Samaria to give him a little water to drink, she expresses great wonder at it, and says, 'How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?' And the Evangelist gives the reason of her wonder—'for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans:' John iv. 9. This being the case, when our Saviour put eternal life on 'obedience' to this law, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' there was great reason to ask the question, 'Who is my neighbor?' Had our Lord told him, in conformity to the opinions and practices of the Jews, that they only were neighbors who were of the family and stock of Abraham, or of the same faith and religion with themselves, the man had found what he sought after, a justification of himself: but when our Saviour, demanding his opinion on the case of the good Samaritan, had forced him into a confession that even the Samaritan was his neighbor, he stood condemned out of his own mouth; and on the example of one whom he reckoned his enemy, was sent away with this short reproof and admonition, 'Go, and do thou likewise.'

The parable of the good Samaritan is so well known, that I shall but just mention the circumstances of it. One travelling from Jerusalem fell among thieves, was robbed and wounded. A priest and a Levite; who were in every sense of the word neighbors to the unfortunate man; and if, in duties of common and general obligation, one can be more obliged than another, they were, by character, especially obliged to relieve this poor neighbor; but they looked on him, and passed by on the other side. A Samaritan, excluded by the Jews from all rights of neighborhood, came by, and had compassion on the sufferer;

he dressed his wounds himself, and afterwards placed him, at his own expense, under the care of one who was to see the cure perfected.

The question now was, who was neighbor to this unfortunate man, in the sense of the law, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' As the case was stated, there was no room to insist on the near relation the priest and Levite bore to the wounded man; the nearer their relation, the worse neighbors were they for neglecting him; no room to object against the Samaritan, his want of relation, or his difference in religion; the less and the fewer his private obligations were, the more disinterested was his obedience to the law, and the better neighbor was he. On the whole of this case, our Lord's conclusion is, 'Go, and do thou likewise.'

Taking then this direction of our blessed Saviour, as it stands explained by these circumstances, it will lead us to consider,

I. The nature and extent of charity, or love to our neighbor.

II. The value of the excuses which men frequently make for neglect of this duty. And,

III. The excellency of that particular charity which gives occasion to this day's meeting.

I. Of the nature and extent of charity, or love to our neighbor.

I observed to you before that the principal intention of our blessed Saviour was not to show the necessity of works of mercy, for that under certain limitations was admitted on all sides. Nor was it to recommend one kind of charity in preference to another, but to show the extent of all. In stating a case, it was necessary to instance in some sort of charitable work; but the conclusion, 'Go, and do thou likewise,' is not confined to that kind of work only, but is intended to show us who are our neighbors in regard to works of mercy and compassion in every kind.

The works of mercy are as various and of as many kinds as the wants and infirmities of men, which are the objects of mercy. Were men perfect, there would be nothing in them to pity or compassionate. Every kind, therefore, and every degree of misery is an object of mercy; and whether men are

exposed to calamities by the necessity of their condition, and the overruling providence of God; or whether they bring them on themselves by sin and wickedness, or by folly and indiscretion; yet still, considered as miserable, they are objects of pity. If this were not so, mercy would not be one of the attributes of the Deity. For he is not moved by a fellow-feeling of our calamities, or any apprehension for himself: for no evil can approach him. Sin and wickedness are attended with guilt as well as misery, and therefore also objects of justice and punishment; and it may, perhaps, be a case attended with difficulties, when we attempt to reconcile the operations of justice and mercy, with respect to the same subject. But if God be a God of mercy, as undoubtedly he is, the conclusion must stand, that misery, viewed by the eye of reason, is an object of compassion; and the consequence must be, that in the reason of things mercy is as extensive as misery; and not to be confined by any particular or partial considerations to misery of one kind, or of one man more than another. If we consider ourselves, therefore, merely as reasonable creatures, no reason can be assigned for excluding any object of misery from our pity and compassion. But if we consider ourselves as men, there is another and perhaps a more sensible inducement to the practice of the works of mercy, and which on examination will be found, as far as our power of doing good goes, of like general influence. And this arises from reflecting that there is no misery we see to which we are not ourselves liable. The case therefore of the miserable is a common case, and in some sense every man's own. If we find ourselves better than others, so as to avoid the calamities which sin and iniquity bring on many; or wiser than others, so as to shun the evils which folly and indiscretion draw down on numbers; this is so far from being a reason why we should despise or neglect their sufferings, that it daily reminds us to ask of ourselves this question, 'Who made thee to differ from another?' And if we answer it as we should, it will furnish us with another reason for the exercise of charity, which will extend to all men.

For if all men are the sons of one common father; if all conditions of life are the appointment of one common master;

no man can be reckoned a stranger to us, who is son of the same father, and servant of the same master; however he may, for reasons unknown to us, be placed in a lower condition of life, and called to serve in a meaner station, endowed with less and fewer abilities.

Carry these considerations with you into the world, and view the wants and necessities of the poor; listen to the cries of widows and orphans, to the moans and complaints of those who suffer under the torments of body or of mind: take into your view the follies and the weaknesses of men, who are perpetually struggling with the inconveniences, which a little prudence might have prevented, but which require a great deal of care and sorrow either to cure or to bear them; and think a little, what reason, what the sense of your own infirmities, what the regard due to the common Father and Master of all, require at your hands. One duly attentive to these reasons could never fall into the little considerations, whether *this* miserable man was his countryman or townsman, whether *the other* was of the same party or opinion with himself; for the great and true reasons on which mercy and charity are founded, exclude all such little respects and relations.

As the case stands thus on the foot of reason, and the natural sentiments of men, so likewise have the precepts of the gospel bound these duties on us in the same extent.

Honor, esteem, and reverence, are due to those who deserve honor, esteem, and reverence; but love is a debt due to all men, and is a debt never to be fully paid and exhausted. Therefore St. Paul commands that we 'render' to every man 'his due,' fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor 'is due:' but when he comes to speak of love, he varies his style, and considers us in this respect as debtors to every man: 'owe' no man any thing, 'but to love one another.' As if he had said, all other debts due to particular persons you must take care to discharge; but love is due to all, and you must never think of paying or clearing the debt of love to each other; for that is a debt which will be owing as long as you live; it is a perpetual duty, and can never have an end. In the same manner are the precepts of love and mercy enjoined by our blessed Saviour in general terms, not confining them to particular objects, but

leaving them at large, and open, to be applied to all men: 'Blessed,' says he, 'are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' Had this been a duty owing to any persons, as they stand particularly related to us, our Lord would not have left this material duty imperfect, by neglecting to specify the proper objects of it; but having directed our love and mercy to no men in particular, we must conclude that all in general are the objects of it.

If we consider these laws as derived from the Author of nature and of the gospel, we shall find that they proceeded from a love as universal as that which they enjoin: the general good of mankind is the end provided for in these laws. The miseries and calamities of life are many, and not to be avoided; and perhaps wise men, though they complain least, feel them most. It is a melancholy thing to reflect how much of this misery is of our own making, and what a great abatement might be made in the sorrows of life, if every man would but lend his hand to make himself and the rest of the world happy. The unkind offices we daily receive from malice, ill-nature, and revenge, from envy, and causeless resentments, make a much greater figure in the calamities of life than all the evils which the providence of God and the condition of human life bring on us. And even the calamities which cannot be avoided, might be mitigated by the kind offices of our brethren. And therefore to oblige men to charity and mercy is to unite them in a confederacy against the evils and miseries of life; that no sooner shall misfortune seize one, but all shall be alarmed, and help flow in from every quarter; that every hand shall bring assistance, and every tongue bring comfort to the afflicted; and each man's happiness be the common concern, while every man loves his neighbor as himself. What a blessed state would this be! and how much happiness did the wise Author of nature design for us, when he made the common interest of mankind to be every particular man's duty! What love to man did the Author of the gospel show, when he required it, as a mark of our being his disciples, that we should love one another!

Having considered now the extent of this great duty of love and mercy towards our brethren, it will be easy, in the second

place, to estimate by this measure what value there is in the excuses which are frequently made for the neglect of this duty.

But to speak without confusion on this subject, it is necessary to distinguish between love as merely a sentiment and habit of the mind, and as coupled with a power and ability to exert itself in external acts of mercy. Considered as a habit and sentiment of the mind, it must be universal without exception; and no pretence whatever can justify malevolence and hatred in any instance. But it may be, and often is the case, that those who have the habit of this virtue are able to exert it in very few instances; they are too poor to give alms, too ignorant to give advice, of too little consideration in the world to aid or protect their neighbors. In all these cases want of ability is something more than an excuse, for an excuse goes to the omission of duty; but there can be no duty or obligation on any man to do what he has no power or ability to perform. But yet let the meanest among us consider that there are duties of love proper to their station; if they have no money to bestow, yet they have good or ill words to bestow on their neighbors; they are able to assist in vindicating or aspersing their characters; and this is an instance in which their good-will or malevolence may be as effectually shown as if they had great revenues to dispose of; and I am afraid the poorer sort, who are petitioners for charity of another kind, want often to be put in mind of *this kind* of charity themselves. But to go on.

Where men's fortunes and stations in the world enable them to exert their love and mercy in acts of generosity and benevolence to persons in distress, there is often an unwillingness, and always an excuse to attend it. From what has been said of the duty in general, it is evident that to confine our charity to relations, acquaintance, or men of the same country, is acting inconsistently with the great reasons on which the duty itself is founded, and is therefore a breach of duty which cannot be justified; and it is indeed that very pretence which our Saviour intended to exclude and condemn in the parable of the good Samaritan. But what shall we say to the personal merit of those who are objects of charity? In the parable the person relieved was a stranger to him who relieved him, and was known to him only by his misery and distress; and there-

fore in this example set before us, the personal character had no influence in the charity. And in other places of the gospel we are exhorted to follow the example set us by our heavenly Father, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. But as no man's ability to do good in any way is unlimited, it is commendable surely to seek after the properest and most deserving objects of charity; and in this consideration the virtue and innocence of the sufferer must be of great moment.

There would perhaps be little reason on the whole to be very nice and curious in the choice of objects, were it not for the many frauds and cheats which are daily practised on the charity of well-disposed persons. Begging is become a trade, and without doubt it is a very wicked one; it is not only a cheat on the giver, but it is robbing the stock of the poor, and perverting what was intended for the comfort of real distress, to the support of idleness. It is greatly injurious to the poor in another respect, as it lays a general suspicion on all who apply for alms; and many a proper object fails of the relief due to him, because he can say no more in his true case than counterfeits say every day in a false one.

There is another very great discouragement which charitable persons are under, from observing the ill use which the poor often make of their benefactions to them. One would imagine that a man who wanted food and raiment, and all other necessaries of life, was pretty well secured against the excesses of strong liquors, or any other temptations, which must necessarily exhaust his little stock, and leave him unable to provide for his wants. But the case is far otherwise: the general corruption of manners, too plainly to be seen in this country, has spread among the lowest; and necessity itself is grown luxurious. It is very much to be lamented that so much art and skill have been shown of late years to make drunkenness the cheapest of all vices; for it will, it already has made it the commonest, and let in all the vices which follow this excess on the poorest of our people; who were formerly so far happy in their poverty, that their want secured them from many vices to which their richer neighbors were exposed.

How to advise charitable persons to steer clear of these in-

conveniences in their private benefactions, I know not: perhaps it may be a good rule in general not to be too curious, or hard to be satisfied in these cases. But with respect to the great work of charity which has called us together this day, I can with pleasure observe to you that it stands free of these difficulties: it will appear so to do from the nature of the charity itself, and the method in which it is conducted; and though neither the persons who have undertaken this good work desire to have their praises set forth, nor is it my intention to do it; yet, in justice to the work itself, give me leave to mention very briefly some circumstances attending it that may recommend it to the approbation of good people.

In the first place, then, the persons admitted to partake in this charity are real objects, and from the nature of the thing they must be so: the blind, the lame, the diseased of various kinds, resort hither for a cure of their evils. That such are proper objects of charity there is no doubt; but when complaints of this nature are used to move private charity, they are often counterfeited; and the money intended for the relief of a poor cripple is perhaps given to a sturdy vagabond. But that case can never happen here; for cheats and counterfeits never come to an hospital to be cured; they never desire that their complaints should be examined by the skilful eye and hand of the surgeon. Whatever therefore may happen in other cases, you may be sure to meet with no frauds of this kind in this charity.

There are distempers, indeed, which may be pretended, and in judging of which even the skilful may be imposed on; but neither will such frauds come here; for nobody will pretend such diseases merely for the sake of going into a course of physic, and submitting to the rules and orders of a place, which, though it affords ample provision for the wants of the miserable, yet it affords no temptation to the idle and vicious, that they should desire to come under the rule and discipline of it.

Secondly, whatever is given in support of this institution flows from the true and generous principle of charity before described: all persons are intitled to relief here, if they really want it; and every contributor is moved by the general regard

to the good of men, without any regard to the little partialities which often influence our private charities, whether we intend they should or no. But to subscribe to support an hospital open to all just complaints, is a general subscription for the assistance and comfort of men in misery and distress, without any other consideration whatever; and therefore this charity has this excellent ingredient in it, that it is 'love without partiality.'

Lastly, there is one inducement more, which is the good management and economy shown in the application of this charity. I have mentioned now a thing worthy to be highly commended and extolled, but not by me in this audience. I shall take notice of it, therefore, only as a fact, a fact published by laying the accounts of this charity before the world, and in which every man who pleases, may, at an easy rate, have full satisfaction.

If this consideration is, and surely it is a great inducement to benefactors to encourage this good work; it is an argument also to those who have employed their time and their pains in the affairs of this house, to persevere in this work of love: their charity is more, perhaps, than they imagine: others give whatever their proportion amounts to; but these, by their good and wise administration, encourage many to give; it is a circumstance which they may reflect on with comfort here, and it will surely have its reward hereafter.

Go on therefore with cheerfulness in this great and good employment, and in confidence that you are serving a Master who will not forget this your work and labor of love.

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE XII.

DEUTERONOMY, CHAP. XXXII.—VERSES 45. 46.

THIS is the last piece of advice which Moses gave to the people of Israel; and as the last advice of dying friends makes a strong impression on the minds of the survivors, so is it natural for those who are leaving this world, to make the thing which they deem of highest importance, the subject of their last advice.

If the character and circumstances of Moses be considered, the advice of the text is no less interesting than it is to be expected: it aims at laying a solid foundation of happiness for that and all succeeding generations, by instructing the people how to perpetuate to their posterity the knowlege of God and of his law, and to make him their constant friend and protector; viz. by instilling into the minds of their children a sense of what God had done for them and their forefathers, and by forming them early to obedience.

The Jews had a still greater reason for discharging this duty: they well knew that they were distinguished from the rest of the world by Providence for the sake of it.

That the command of Moses lays an obligation on parents to use their authority with their children to bring them into subjection to the law of God, is put out of all doubt by the language of the text. But this precept had a larger and more extensive view, being given not merely as the advice of a preacher, but as the injunction of a great lawgiver. The education therefore of the children of a country may, and ought, in all wise governments, to be considered as a national concern.

To judge of the methods which have been, or may be, applied to propagate or preserve religion in the world, we must consider the nature, capacities, and circumstances of men in general; the influences under which they act, and which of them may be properly made use of in the case in question. Religion being the service of a free agent, all external force is excluded as absolutely improper: instruction is the proper application to a reasonable mind; and were men under no influence but that of reason, instruction would be the only proper application: but men are born with passions also that become turbulent; and therefore authority is wanted as well as instruction, to form the mind to virtue and religion.

Some persons object to this method of propagating religion, and think that all men should be left free to judge for themselves, without the prejudices of education being thrown into the scale on either side. It is no uncommon thing for men to pursue their speculations till they lose sight of nature; whence they fall into notions contradictory to the experience of mankind, and impossible to be reduced to practice. If we look into the history of ages past, we shall find no instance of children brought up free from the impressions of custom and education; the nature and condition of men considered, it is impossible there ever should be: so that where parents do omit the instruction of their children, it is but leaving them to receive impressions from far worse hands.

But as this objection, if there be any weight in it, directly impeaches the means ordained by Providence for perpetuating the great truths of religion both under the Jewish and Christian dispensations, it may be proper to consider farther, how it stands on the grounds of reason and human nature.

Did men come into this world perfect, and equally perfect, as to all the faculties of the understanding, there might be some reason perhaps for saying, 'leave them to judge for themselves.' But as the case is otherwise, and we arrive by slow degrees to

the use of reason and the knowlege of things about us, nature directs that parents should teach their children, as they grow capable of learning, the things that are necessary to their well-being.

The great force of custom and education, whether rightly applied or otherwise, could not be long unobserved in the world: as soon as it was observed, it became a strong call on the natural affection of parents to guard the tender minds of their children against wrong impressions, and to prevent evil habits. Without the exercise of this care in some degree, authority cannot be maintained on the part of parents, nor duty required on the part of children. If parents have nothing to teach, what have children to obey?

When the ways of men grew corrupt, custom and education went over to the side of vice and superstition, and soon spread the follies of idolatry far and wide: these took such deep root, that human reason could not shake them, but was content for ages to wear the chains of blind superstition. Custom and education cannot be shut out of the case: influence they must and will have; and if they are not secured on the side of reason, they will soon grow to be tyrants over it; and men will think and act as if they had none.

So general and so strong is the force of custom and education, that the influence may be said to be natural to the mind of man; and if so, it was doubtless intended by Providence to serve good purposes. That he intended it for this use, is manifest also from his making this use of it, and from his interposing to correct the abuses to which this natural influence was but too liable through the passions and corruptions of men.

Consideration of what provision was made at the beginning of things for propagating religion in the world.

Consideration of what care was taken of religion at the restoration of the world after the deluge: to check the course of succeeding impiety, and keep up a sense of true religion, a

nation of God's own peculiar people was raised up: Abraham made choice of: a law given to his descendants, with signs and wonders: memory of it perpetuated by various rites and ceremonies: these, introduced at first by positive law, soon obtained the force of national customs, and were a strong barrier against idolatry.

These institutions however were not intended to operate merely by the force of custom, but were adopted to preserve and renew the memory of the true reasons in which the Jewish religion was founded: they were intended to make custom subservient to reason and true religion.

On this ground did that religion stand, till God thought fit by a new revelation to call all the world to repentance and obedience to the gospel. The nations of the earth were idolatrous before the coming of Christ; their worship was impure and depraved; and their forms of superstition, supported by custom, had got strong possession of the human heart.

To root out this inveterate evil required supernatural assistance; and yet such as was consistent with the freedom and reason of human minds, and agreeable to the nature of religion, which loses its very being when it is separated from freedom and reason. The power of miracles was such an assistance; for miracles are an appeal to reason, as much as the works of nature are; and therefore, when offered in support of true religion, are to be considered as new arms put into the hands of reason, to subdue the powers of corrupt custom and education.

The subject does not lead to a consideration of all the purposes which Providence had to serve by the power of miracles; but this manifestly was one, to awaken the attention of the world, to consider what they and their idolatrous fathers had been doing, &c.

When reason and true religion were by this powerful assistance set free from the shackles of idolatry and superstition,

miracles ceased; and for perpetuating the knowlege of God and of his truth in the world, the natural and ordinary methods of teaching and instructing received an additional strength, by an order of men set apart for that purpose. This was an additional strength to the ordinary means of instruction, but was never meant to supersede them; for parents are obliged by the law of the gospel and of nature to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and where this care has been neglected, it is rarely that the other can take place.

What then is there in the present circumstances of things that we can do to promote virtue and religion? We have only natural and ordinary means within our power. May we use them? or must the care of virtue and religion be given up? If not, the properest, if not the only way to preserve them, is to lay a foundation for the youth of the country. But these general reflexions arise so naturally, that we may go on to consider the particular case now before us.

The state of religion in Ireland well deserves the attention of every man in this kingdom, who has a concern either for the purity of the gospel, or the security of our government.

The Reformation was very imperfectly carried on in that country; so that the bulk of the people have ever been, and still are, papists: state of Ireland from this circumstance, as well as from the peculiar language of the people, which renders it difficult to enlighten them, considered. Uncomfortable state of the protestant clergy there described: feeling exhortation addressed to all who may have it in their power to alleviate this state of things. Encouragement to do this, arising from a consideration of the prosperity and welfare of our own constitution. The present government and the protestant religion must stand or fall together: papists are by principle enemies to both; and by the lowest computation they are in Ireland as five to two. Civil and military power indeed are in the hands of protestants; and in times of peace perhaps they

are able to preserve public tranquillity; but in public commotions the strength of popery has always been grievously experienced: this point enlarged on.

What then shall we say to this state of the case? Shall these numbers continue still to be our enemies? or shall we try to gain their affections, and make them friends to the government? Shall we allow them even to remain untaught, uncultivated, and therefore useless to themselves and to the world? or shall we show them the arts of life and honest industry, teach them to be happy, and serviceable to themselves and to the public? There can be no doubt which part is to be chosen. Concluding observations.

DISCOURSE XII.

Preached before the Society, corresponding with the Incorporated Society in Dublin, for promoting English Protestant Schools in Ireland, at St. Mary-le-Bow, March 17, 1738.

DEUTERONOMY, CHAP. XXXII.—VERSES 45. 46.

And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel:
And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.

YOU have in the text the last piece of advice which Moses gave to the people of Israel; for on the self-same day on which he made this exhortation, he was summoned by God to depart from this world; accordingly he died on the mountain of Nebo, and was gathered to his people.

The last advice of dying friends naturally makes a strong impression on the minds of those who survive them; and it is as natural for those who are leaving this world, to make the thing which they esteem to be of the greatest consequence and importance to their friends, who are to stay behind them, the subject matter of their last advice.

Consider now the character of Moses; the many years he spent in conducting the people of Israel from Egypt to the land of promise; the high office he bore, by being appointed by God a prophet and lawgiver to his people: consider him, after a long course of teaching and exhortation, giving his last advice before he died; and you must needs think the happiness of the people to be extremely concerned in the matter

recommended to them by so great a friend, by one of such authority, and under such circumstances.

The advice is no less interesting than is to be expected: it aims at laying a solid foundation of happiness for that and all succeeding generations; by instructing the people how to perpetuate to their posterity the knowlege of God and his law, and to make him their constant friend and protector; namely, by instilling into the minds of their children a sense of the great things which God had done for them and their forefathers, and by forming them early to obedience to the divine law under which they lived: 'Ye shall command your children to observe and do all the words of this law.'

The Jews had still a greater reason to be careful and constant in discharging this duty towards their children; they had not only the last command of their great lawgiver for it, but they well knew that they were distinguished from the rest of the world by Providence for the sake of this duty. Their great ancestor Abraham was chosen to be the head of a great nation, that he might, and because God knew he would, be diligent to transmit to his posterity the knowlege of God's laws, and to breed them up in obedience to them. In the eighteenth chapter of the book of Genesis, God declares his purpose of making 'Abraham a great and mighty nation;' and that 'all the nations of the earth should be blessed in him.' At the 19th verse, the reason of this peculiar regard to Abraham is given: 'For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.'

That the command of Moses lays an obligation on parents to make use of their authority with their children to bring them into subjection to the law of God, is put out of all doubt by the language of the text. They were to command their children to observe and do all the words of the law. But this precept had a larger and more extensive view, being given not merely as the advice of a preacher, but as the injunction of a great lawgiver, prescribing a proper method to establish and secure the prosperity of a nation. The education therefore of the children of a country may, and ought, in all wise governments, to be considered as a national concern.

This conclusion may appear perhaps with greater force, as supported by the declaration of God concerning Abraham, just before mentioned. God saw that Abraham would command his children and household after him to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment; and therefore he determined to make him a great and mighty nation. Now if this disposition, seen and approved in Abraham, has no relation to the office of a public magistrate, the reason given for making Abraham head of a great people is a very strange one. For if the magistrate has, and ought to have, no concern in seeing the youth of the country brought up in the fear of God, Abraham's disposition to take this care on him could be no reason for making him the head of a great nation.

To judge of the methods which have been or may be applied to propagate or preserve religion and the fear of God in the world, we must consider the nature, capacities, and circumstances of men in general; the influences under which they act; and which of them may be properly made use of in the case in question. Religion being the service of a free agent, all external force is excluded as absolutely improper: instruction is the proper application to a reasonable mind; and were men under no influence but that of reason, instruction would be the only proper application: but men are born with passions as well as reason, and the passions grow strong and turbulent, much sooner than reason comes to such maturity as to be able to correct and restrain them; and therefore authority is wanted as well as instruction, to form the minds of men to virtue and religion.

I am sensible there are some, who have their objections to this method of propagating religion, who think all men should be left free to judge for themselves, without having the prejudices of education thrown into the scale on either side. They see that in Christian countries all are, through the power of education, Christians; in Mahometan countries they are, for the same reason, Mahometans; and they think true religion should reject the use of those means which serve indifferently to promote truth and falsehood.

It is no uncommon thing for men to pursue their speculations till they lose sight of nature; the consequence of which

is, that they fall into notions contradictory to the experience of mankind, and absolutely impossible to be reduced to practice.

Look into the history of ages past, there is no instance to be found of children brought up free from the impressions of custom and education; consider the nature and condition of men, and it is impossible there ever should be.

Children have eyes and ears; what they see they naturally imitate; what they hear influences their tender minds. And where parents neglect the care of their children, they are left to chance, and pick up notions and opinions from others; perhaps from the footman, who oftentimes is constant companion to the heir of the family. So that where parents omit to instruct their children, it is not leaving them to their own freedom of judgment, but it is leaving them to receive impressions from far worse hands.

But as this objection, if there be any weight in it, directly impeaches the natural means ordained by Providence for preserving true religion, and the means enjoined as well under the Christian as the Jewish dispensation for perpetuating the great truths of revelation, it may be proper, perhaps, to take this matter a little higher, and consider how it stands on the principles of reason and human nature.

Did men come into this world perfect, and equally perfect, having their minds stored with all necessary ideas, and able to make a proper use of all the faculties of the understanding, there might be some reason, perhaps, in saying, 'Leave themselves to judge for themselves.' But as the case is otherwise, and we bring little more into the world with us than an animal life, and arrive by slow degrees to the use of reason and the knowlege of things about us, it is the direction of nature, in consequence of this course of nature, that parents should teach their children, as they grow capable of learning, the things that are necessary to their well-being.

The great force of custom and education, whether rightly applied or otherwise, could not be long unobserved in the world: as soon as it was observed, it became a strong call on the natural affections of parents to guard the tender minds of their children against wrong impressions, and to prevent the

growth of evil habits in them. Without the exercise of this care in some degree, authority cannot be maintained on the part of parents, nor duty required on the part of children. If parents have nothing to teach, what have children to obey? What then must become of the natural duties arising from this relation, when nothing will remain, unless perhaps some degree of fondness, such as brute creatures have by instinct of nature?

That this natural force of custom and education was intended by Providence to act in conjunction with reason for the support of virtue and religion, there can be no doubt; and whoever considers what God has done, by natural or supernatural means, for the sake of religion, will see abundant evidence for this truth.

But when the ways of men grew corrupt, when custom and education were gone over to the side of vice and superstition, and reason and religion were left alone to struggle for themselves; it is hardly to be imagined how universally the corruption spread, and how strong possession was given to idolatry and superstition throughout the world. It may be hard to say what induced men at first to consecrate birds and beasts, stocks and stones, and to fall down and worship them. But when once those follies were introduced, custom and education spread them far and wide; and they took such deep root, that human reason could not shake them, but was content for ages together to wear the chains of blind superstition. Custom and education cannot be shut out of the case, and influence they must and will have; and if they are not secured on the side of reason, and taken in as assistants to it, they will soon grow to be tyrants over reason; and men will think and act as if they had none.

We read in ancient story of a people who used, when their parents and relations were grown old and infirm, to kill them and feast on them. The custom appeared, as well it might, barbarous and inhuman in the eyes of all civilised nations; but those people being asked in their turn what they thought of those who suffered their aged parents to linger and die of themselves, and then burned or buried their dead bodies, they expressed the greatest abhorrence for such impiety. Had the

Egyptians, or any other people, been examined in like manner on any or all their superstitions, their sentiments in favor of their national customs would have been found as strong, and as hard to be rectified.

So general and so strong is the force of custom and education, that the influence may be said to be natural to the mind of man; and if the influence is natural, it was doubtless designed by the Author of nature to be subservient to good purposes. That he intended it for this use, is manifest also from his making this use of it, and from his interposing to correct the abuses to which this natural influence was but too liable through the passions and corruptions of men.

Consider from the beginning of things what provision was made for propagating religion in the world. Adam was created in the state of manhood; and as he came a man, and not a child, out of the hands of his Creator, he brought into the world with him all knowlege necessary to a man; of which the knowlege of God and true religion was the most necessary part. Of him then sufficient care was taken.

But all after him came infants into the world, void of knowlege, capable of coming at it but by slow degrees, and liable to many errors in the only thing they had to depend on, the use of their reason. What care now was taken to direct them right in this momentous affair of religion? Was it not plainly this, that they were put into the hands of an instructor who was himself instructed by God, able to teach them the great works of Providence in the creation of all things, and to point out to them the duty owing from the creature to the Creator?

How long this influence continued to preserve a sense of true religion we know not; probably in some tolerable degree for many ages; for many ages passed before God, for the wickedness of men, destroyed the world by a deluge.

Consider now again what care was taken of religion at the restoration of the world after the deluge; the wicked with all their ungodly deeds perished in the waters: one distinguished 'preacher of righteousness,' with his family, was saved, to be the father of a new world, and to teach the ways of righteousness to his posterity. And what was this but uniting once more the force of reason, education, and custom in the cause of virtue

and holiness; and turning its natural influence into its proper channel, which had been divided and perverted by the wickedness of men?

After the deluge, as the world grew populous, it grew corrupt again; and idolatry overspread the face of the earth. God had promised never to destroy the earth again for the wickedness of the inhabitants. But to check the course of impiety, and to keep up a sense and evidence of true religion in the midst of an idolatrous generation, he thought fit in his wisdom to raise up a nation to be his own peculiar people. He made choice of Abraham to be head and father of this nation, and we are at no loss to account for the reason of this choice; for God has told us with what view he elected Abraham—'I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.'

When the descendants from Abraham were grown numerous enough to make a people of themselves, God was pleased to give them a law, introduced and confirmed by many signal deliverances, and many signs and wonders; and to perpetuate the memory of them through all generations, many rights and ceremonies were instituted, to be constant parts of the national religion; which represented and set before the eyes of the people the great things which God had done for them; such, for instance, was the passover; such was that solemn profession to be made at the offering of the first-fruits, recorded in the book of Deuteronomy. He who brought the offering was to speak and say before the Lord his God,

'—A Syrian ready to perish was my father; and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous;

'And the Egyptians evil-intreated us, and afflicted us, and laid on us hard bondage:

'And when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our afflictions, and our labor, and our oppression:

'And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders;

'And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey.

'And now, behold, I have brought the first-fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me.'

These institutions, introduced at first by positive law, soon obtained the force of national customs, and became a strong barrier against the superstition of the idolatrous nations round Judea; and they were intended to answer this purpose.

But it must be observed of these institutions in general, that they were not intended to operate merely by the force of custom, but were adapted to preserve and renew the memory of the true reasons in which the religion of the Jews was founded. If you had been to reason with a Jew on the obedience due to the law of Moses, could you say more to him than what the feast of the passover taught him, and what the profession made at the offering of the first-fruits contained? These institutions therefore intended to make custom subservient to reason and true religion; and they were so constituted that they could go no where as customs without carrying with them the true reason of religion.

On this foot the Jewish religion stood, till God thought fit by a new revelation to call all the world to repentance, and obedience to the gospel of Christ Jesus.

The nations of the earth were idolaters before the coming of Christ; and their religious worship was not only directed to false objects, but was in itself impure and corrupt, and tended to introduce great depravity of manners. The several forms of superstition in several countries had establishment, education, and custom, to support them; and these prescriptive rights had got such strong possession, that there was no hope of seeing them beat out by human wisdom. Some few perhaps saw the follies which surrounded them; but their wisdom was of no use towards reforming the world, whatever it might be to themselves.

To root out this inveterate evil required supernatural assistance; and yet such assistance as was consistent with the freedom and reason of human minds, and agreeable to the nature of religion; which loses its very being when it is separated from freedom and reason.

The power of miracles was such an assistance; for miracles are an appeal to reason, as much as the works of nature are; and therefore miracles offered in support of true religion are to be considered as new arms put into the hand of reason, to enable it to subdue the powers of corrupt custom and education.

My subject does not lead me to consider all the purposes which Providence had to serve by the power of miracles; but this manifestly was one, though not the only one, to awaken the attention of the world, to consider what they and their fathers had been doing when they fell down before stocks and stones, and forgot the Lord who made them, and to whose command they saw all nature was obedient.

When reason and true religion were by this powerful assistance set free from the shackles of idolatry and superstition, miracles ceased; and for perpetuating the knowlege of God and of his truth in the world, the natural and ordinary methods of teaching and instructing received an additional strength under the gospel, by setting apart an order of men, whose business it should be to publish to every generation the great things which God had wrought for them through Christ Jesus. This, I say, was an additional strength to the ordinary and natural means of education, but was never designed to supersede it; for parents are obliged by the law of the gospel, as well as by the law of nature, to breed up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and where this care is wanting, it is rarely that the other can take place: children neglected naturally grow headstrong and self-willed; and we see by sad experience that they are sent too late for instruction to the church, who were never inured to it at home.

Laying then these things together, consider, what is there in the present circumstances of things that we can do to promote virtue and religion in the world? We have only natural and ordinary means within our power. May we use them? or must the care of virtue and religion be given up? If not, the properest, I had almost said, the only effectual method to preserve them, is to lay a foundation for the youth of the country.

But these general reflexions do so naturally arise from what has been said, that I will leave them to your own thoughts, and go on to consider the particular case now before us.

The state of religion in Ireland very well deserves the attention of every man in this kingdom, who has a concern either for the purity of the gospel, or for the security of the government under which we live.

The Reformation was very imperfectly carried on in Ireland; and the bulk of the people have been ever since, and still are, papists. The natives have a language of their own, extremely hard to be learned or understood by any but themselves, which makes it almost impossible to convey any light or knowlege to them. The priests among them, who talk their language, being born and bred among them, know as little of any thing else as the people themselves do. So that popery in Ireland is old traditionary popery, without any of the correction or improvement which popery in other parts has been forced into by the light of the Reformation. The learned of the church of Rome have been long palliating and refining their absurd doctrines and practices. Tell them that they worship saints and images, they will distinguish between direct worship and relative worship, between religious service, and honor and respect due to the saints. But the poor Irish worship saints and images, and have never heard even of these refinements; which being invented as answers to objections, are of no use among a poor people, secured, by their ignorance and a language understood by themselves only, from all objections.

Not many years ago a worthy clergyman of Ireland, with great pains and labor, made himself master of the language of the natives, with an intent to preach the gospel among them. He entered on the work, and the success seemed to outrun his wishes: his audience was numerous, and the people seemed to be much affected with his discourses; but as soon as this was perceived, the priests had orders to publish an excommunication against every person who should attend these sermons: the effect was, that the preacher was intirely deserted.

The case is much the same in some parishes of the kingdom, which have not a protestant in them, except the minister of the parish; but few, perhaps, who understand this language, and they restrained by all the terrors which the priests of Rome can infuse into poor ignorant people, from giving ear to his instructions. How uncomfortable a situation must this be to

an honest-minded clergyman, to find himself placed in an office, with a great trust annexed to it, and which it is morally impossible for him to discharge; what a reproach is it to our protestant church in the eyes of the adversary, to have shepherds appointed, and no flocks to be attended; rulers settled where there are none to be directed; ministers without congregations; preachers without hearers!

This great evil ought to be removed, must be removed, as far as proper and reasonable methods can prevail; and till all reasonable methods are tried, the reproach will remain with us unanswered.

Consider this state of religion; and let every Christian lay his hand to his heart, and say, whether this case calls for help or no. Can we be blameless, if we look on and see thousands perish for whom Christ died, without so much as offering to help or relieve them? These people, poor as they are, ignorant as they are, are yet children of the same Father with us, men of the same nature, fellow-subjects and fellow Christians: if they know but little of Christ, by whose name they are called; if they live in darkness and superstition, and in blind obedience to popish tyranny; they are but in the same case in which our forefathers were, and from which we are happily delivered. How strongly do these circumstances plead their cause! The reverence we have for the common Father of all; the benevolence due to our fellow-creatures; the love we owe to men united to us in one and the same society; compassion to their unfortunate case, which was once our own; regard to the name of Christ, by which they and we are called; do with one voice exhort, incite, and provoke us to this labor and work of love, in which their present and future happiness, the glory of God, and the honor of the gospel are so nearly concerned.

There is another consideration well worth your attention, which, though it affords not so strong a reason as those before mentioned, yet a strong one it does afford, to encourage you to go on with the good work you have undertaken; I mean the prosperity and welfare of the constitution and government under which we live.

The present government and the Protestant religion must stand or fall together; papists are by principle enemies to both;

the more ignorant they are, the more determined and desperate enemies they will be; as being free from the restraints of conscience and reflexion, to yield blind obedience to their directors.

The papists in Ireland, by the lowest computation I have seen, are five to two. The civil and military government are in the hands of protestants, and in times of public tranquillity are sufficient to keep the papists in due obedience: but whenever the public has been distressed by internal commotions, the strength of popery in Ireland has been fatally experienced. The situation of affairs in Charles the First's time brought them to take arms; and the general massacre of the Protestants is still fresh in memory, in which thousands perished by cruelties unknown even among barbarous nations.

At the Revolution, the popery of Ireland endangered the protestantism of the three kingdoms, by finding employment for the arms of England, when they were wanted elsewhere to support the cause of liberty and religion: and should we ever be so unhappy as to see our religion and liberty put again to the chance of war, there can be no doubt which side the Irish papists would take.

Even in the times of peace they are of little use to the public, being through want of education greatly unacquainted with the arts of civil life, and strangers to the improvements which make men great and considerable. They may be fit for arms, but they are not fit to be trusted in a protestant army: many of them indeed take to this employment; and they are a seminary for foreign troops; a strength bred up among ourselves, but always at the service of our enemies. So that when you compute their numbers and their force, you must place their strength to the account, not of their natural prince, the king of Great Britain, but rather to some foreign powers, and to those especially of whom England has the greatest reason to be jealous.

What shall we say then to this state of the case? Shall these great numbers continue still to be our enemies? or shall we try to gain their affections, and make them friends as well as subject to the government? Shall we see them still sacrificing their lives due to the defence of their country, in the service of

foreign powers? or shall we engage their hearts and hands in a nobler warfare, in the cause of liberty? Shall we permit them to remain untaught, uncultivated, useless to themselves and to the world? or shall we show them the arts of life and honest industry, teach them to be happy, and of service to themselves and to the public?

There can be no doubt which part is to be chosen. But as even the temporal advantages proposed are not to be obtained but by setting these poor people free from the tyranny of popery, and by opening their minds to see and receive the truths of the gospel; the methods to be used with them must be such as are consistent with the nature of religion, and such as the circumstances of the people will admit.—And such only have you made choice of.

When you receive children, whose parents willingly intrust them to your care, (and others you seek not after,) you act by commission under the paternal authority, and are authorised by the same natural right, when you teach and instruct such children, as parents themselves are when they teach and instruct their own. Whoever therefore has any objection to the work you are engaged in, must first dispute the parent's right to educate his own children, before he can controvert yours.

If the consent of parents gives you a right, your charity and benevolence in undertaking a duty, which the poor parents are incapable of discharging themselves, will not fail to give you a reward in due time. Ages to come, when they feel the happy change, the foundation of which is now laying, shall bless your memory; and thousands yet unborn may owe their happiness in this world, and their hopes in a better, to this work and labor of love.

Go on then, and may success wait on your care! The wishes of all who wish well to their country, are with you; and every good man, if he has nothing else to give, will bestow his prayers, that this work of the Lord may prosper in your hands.

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE XIII.

II CORINTHIANS, CHAP. IX.—VERSE 12.

To take in the full sense of the Apostle on this subject, the 14th verse ought to be read together with the text.

The occasion of these words explained: hence an inference is drawn, that it is not only lawful, but laudable, to make the natural passions and inclinations of men subservient to the cause of virtue and religion. These motives however must be kept in their proper place; we may recommend them, but they cannot make a duty: the ground of obedience lies deeper: this shown to be regard for the honor of God, for the good of our brethren, and for our own happiness; which principles, though considered distinct, are as it were united: nor must we imagine that they are peculiar to works of charity, since they extend to all parts of our duty; and from them all religion is derived.

In treating therefore this subject, three considerations are proposed: I. how these principles influence religion in general: II. how plainly and evidently they lead us to works of charity and mercy: III. how effectually they conspire to recommend that good work which is the object of this meeting in the presence of God.

First, then: man is a religious creature, in consequence of his being a rational one: our obligations to do right arise from the natural powers with which we are endowed, to distinguish between right and wrong: this point enlarged on. When once a man has attained to the knowlege of God, and of the rela-

tion he bears to him, and feels the natural obligations from thence arising to love, honor, and obey his Maker; though other considerations may come in to incline him to his duty, yet none can add to his obligations; since he already acts on the highest principle which a rational mind is capable of entertaining.

The second principle of duty, which is the love of our neighbor, may be considered in two views; either as it results from the common relation which all men bear to God, or from the relation which men bear to each other. In the first view, to love our neighbor is properly a religious act, and part of the duty which we owe to God, whose attributes must render it acceptable to him. But besides this, could we suppose men to forget God without forgetting themselves, and losing the reason which they are endowed with, the very light of reason, assisted by their natural faculty of distinguishing what is right and wrong, would oblige them to use each other with justice and with tenderness: this point enlarged on.

Join these two considerations together, and you see into the very source of all the obligations a man can be under to do good to his fellow-creatures. We can consider men only as they stand related to us, or as they and we stand equally related to God, our common father; and under these views we may discover whatever we owe to man for his own sake, or for the sake of God who made him, and discern the whole compass of our duty with respect to the second great branch of it, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*

The third thing then is now considered, viz. the love of ourselves and our own happiness; and how far this will and ought to influence our religious obedience.

It is evident from the common and universal sense of mankind, that the desires of life and happiness are impressions which come from the Author of nature; and consequently that to follow these impressions, and act according to them, is

greeable to nature and to the will of God, the Author of them. t is reasonable for a man to be concerned for his own happiess, and consonant to the divine will; and considering the rict union which God has made between our happiness and ur duty, this principle will always be a powerful one in natters of religion: this point enlarged on.

To judge rightly therefore of the motives on which men act n their religious concerns, we must judge of the nature of the appiness which they propose to themselves; and as long as ien seek after that which is natural and proper, and intended or them by God, so long they act on motives agreeable to his ill.

The happiness in which men are capable of having any share, r for which they have any desires, is either that which belongs this world, or that which belongs to the world to come. hat future rewards are proper incitements to virtue and reliion, is plain from Scripture; but these do not alter the nature f religion, or give to God a better title to our obedience than e had before: this point enlarged on.

As to the happiness of this present life, we can as little uestion whether God intended men to be happy here, as hether he intends them to be so hereafter: the natural desires men after this happiness, the necessary connexion between it nd virtue, and the goodness of God towards his creatures, will ot permit us to doubt it. Under the old law we find the romises of this life expressly made to religious obedience by od himself: even under the gospel we are assured that *odliness has the promises of the life that now is, and of that hich is to come.* To encourage ourselves therefore in our ity with the hopes that God will reward us here with life, ealth, and prosperity, is no blemish to our religion, but rather n act of faith in God as Governor of the world. Our Saviour ckons but two heads of religion, the *love of God*, and the *love our neighbor;* but the second of these plainly infers another,

the love of ourselves, for we are to love our neighbor as ourselves: this point enlarged on.

Second consideration; how plainly and evidently these principles lead us to works of charity and mercy.

He that oppresseth the poor, reproacheth his Maker; but he that honoreth him hath mercy on the poor. The poor are the creatures of God, not only as they are men, but also as they are poor men: the different orders and degrees of mankind are from the hand of God; and to despise or oppress a man for being what God has thought fit to make him, is to reproach God. Besides, works of mercy redound to the honor of God, through the praises and thanksgivings of those who feel comfort and relief by them. Unexpected relief given to the indigent naturally creates in them a great sense of Providence; it raises them to a thankful acknowlegement of his regard towards them, and disposes them to a religious dependence on him in the midst of all their distress. That the good and welfare of men are directly consulted by the charitable hand, is too plain to admit of a doubt; hence it is to be lamented that so many impostures make good people distrustful, and thus bring difficulties on the deserving poor. We therefore can no otherwise answer this end of charity, the doing good to others, than by taking some care to place our charity right, and to distinguish between the truly needful and the idle beggar.

But, thirdly, by works of mercy and charity we make the best provision for our own present and future happiness. This may be concluded from what has been already said; for since such works have so plain a tendency to promote the honor of God, we cannot doubt but that he will reward such as take pleasure therein: add to this, the express promises of the gospel made to these works especially, and we have all the security that can be desired or expected.

The final retribution for this and every other work must be expected from the justice of God in the day of judgment, but

is hinders not but that we may justly hope for part of our ward in this life: this point enlarged on.

Last thing proposed, viz. to show how these considerations nspire to recommend to us that good work which is the object the present meeting.

If to supply the temporal wants of the brethren be a work doûnding to the honor of God, behold these numerous objects, l wearing the livery of charity, not as a badge of servitude to y earthly master, but as a token that they and their bene- ctors are equally servants of God: nor are their present wants d necessities the only concern of this pious institution; for a undation is laid for the constant support of themselves and eir families.

But the supplying of the temporal wants of the poor is not e only nor the chief end of these institutions: they have other view, which more directly regards the honor and glory God; the instructing of youth in the principles of virtue and ligion, teaching them to know God betimes, and the obe- ence due to him. To instruct undisciplined youth in the inciples of faith and obedience, what is it but to extend the minion of God over his creatures, and to lay up in store for rselves more than a conqueror's crown?

The argument has the same advantage with respect to the od of those who are the immediate objects of this charity: it s this in common with other charities, that it supplies the nts of the poor: it has this above many others, that it is a vision against future wants: but its chief glory is, that it is provision not only for the present comforts of this life, but o for the happiness of that which is eternal. Lastly, as to the couragers and supporters of this good work, God is their ward; and they need not doubt but that the promises of the spel shall be justified to them both in this life and in that ich is to come. Conclusion.

DISCOURSE XIII.

Preached at St. Sepulchre's, May 21, 1719, at the anniversary meeting of the children educated in the charity school.

II CORINTHIANS, CHAP. IX.—VERSE 12.

For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God.

To take in the full sense of the Apostle on this subject, the 14th verse ought to be read together with the text; and then the whole will run thus: 'For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; and by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.'

The occasion of these words was in short this: the Apostle had been making collections among the Christians of several countries for the relief of the poor distressed brethren in Judea; and intending shortly to visit Corinth, he sends before him an exhortation to them to be in readiness to answer the hopes and expectations which themselves had raised in him, that he should receive a large supply at their hands. The chapter of the text is intirely spent in this argument; the Apostle introduces it with excusing his writing on this subject, since he knew how forward they were of their own accord, and how much their zeal had provoked and stirred up others to be liberal; but then from this very circumstance he justifies his application to them, and urges them in a very powerful manner to make good their fair promises, lest haply if they should after all be found unprepared

at his coming, both he and they should be 'ashamed' in their 'confident boasting.' I should not have taken notice of this argument made use of by the Apostle to stir up the Corinthians' charity, which is not indeed founded on the nature of the good work itself, or in the promises of the gospel, but for the sake of observing to you that it is not only lawful but laudable to make the natural passions and inclinations of men subservient to the cause of virtue and religion; that it is no way unbecoming a preacher of the gospel to apply to that sense of shame, to that love of credit and good report, which God has implanted in men, to be perpetual incitements to actions virtuous and praiseworthy. These motives however must be kept in their proper place; we may recommend, but they cannot make a duty; the ground of our obedience lies deeper. The honor of God, the good of our brethren, the care of our own happiness, are the springs from whence all duties flow; and though we may consider these as distinct heads, yet they always unite in one stream, and run together without division: for whilst we do good to others, we do honor to God, and take the best care of ourselves; and the honor we have for God will as naturally show forth itself in the love of the brotherhood, as it will certainly end in our own happiness.

From these principles the Apostle exhorts the Corinthians to set forward the charity proposed to them with a liberal hand, assuring them that it would be abundant to the honor and glory of God, through many thanksgivings; that it would supply the wants of the saints; and that it would return to them in blessings, through the prayers that would be offered to God in their behalf.

We must not imagine that these principles are peculiar to works of charity and beneficence, for they really extend to all parts of our duty: all religion is derived from them; and there is nothing we are bound to, but as it relates either to the honor of God, or the good of mankind, or our own welfare.

In treating therefore of this subject, I shall consider,

First, how these principles influence religion in general.

Secondly, how plainly and evidently they lead us to works of charity and mercy.

Thirdly, I will show you how effectually they do conspire to

recommend to us that good work, for the promoting of which we are this day met together in the presence of God.

First then, let us consider how these principles influence religion in general.

Man is a religious creature in consequence of his being a rational one; our obligations to do right arise from the natural powers with which we are endowed, to distinguish between right and wrong; and when in any case in which we are concerned to act, our reason discovers to us what is right, it at the same time unavoidably fixes our duty and obligation.

It is but too plain that to know and feel the obligations we are under is one thing, and to comply with them in practice is another; all wilful sinners feel the obligations they are under to do right, and yet are carried by other inducements, which have greater force on their minds, to do wrong; and where men comply with their duty, it is not always, nay, it is perhaps but rarely, for the sake of that natural light of reason only, which creates the duty; but for other reasons, which affect their own interest and convenience. And this shows the difference between the principles, and the mere motives of religion.

A rational mind ought especially to be influenced by the power of reason; and if we could separate men from the corrupt passions and affections which hang about them, the same light of reason which shows them their duty would sufficiently move and influence their wills to obedience; in which case the principles and the motives of religion would be exactly the same; and the act of obedience would be sincere and pure, and of the same kind with the light of reason from which it flows. Such obedience as this is in the highest degree rational and religious; and though laws, both human and divine, are guarded with hopes and fears, yet the workings of such hopes and fears cannot add to the religion of such obedience; unless you suppose that there is more religion in being moved by our own passions, than in being conducted by the clear light of our reason and understanding.

When once a man has attained to the knowlege of God, and of the relation he bears to him, and feels the natural obligations from thence arising to love, honor, and obey his Maker;

though other considerations may come in with good effect to incline his will to his duty, yet no other considerations can add to his obligations, or make the duty of obedience more a duty, or more an act of true religion than it was before: for he who honors and obeys God, because he knows that God ought to be honored and obeyed by him, his creature and his servant, acts on as high and as true a principle of religion as a rational mind is capable of.

The second principle of duty, which is the love of our neighbor, may be considered in two views, either as it results from the common relation which all men bear to God, or from the relation which men bear to each other. In the first view, to love our neighbor is properly a religious act, and part of the duty we owe to God; and he knows but little of God and his attributes, who cannot from thence discern that to do good to our fellow-creatures is an acceptable part of obedience to him; that to vex, injure, and oppress them, is injurious to him, the common Father and Maker of all men.

But besides this, could we suppose men to forget God without forgetting themselves, and losing the reason with which they are endowed; the very light of reason, assisted by the natural faculty of distinguishing what is right and wrong, would oblige men to use each other with justice and with tenderness: for reason itself is a law to a reasonable mind: and in the present case, you must either say that it would be altogether as reasonable an act in a man, who believes not in God, to murder an innocent child, as to nourish and support it; or you must allow that reason alone in this case makes a difference, and creates such an obligation as a reasonable mind must ever be sensible of, and inclined to follow. I would not call this religious obedience; but it is obedience to the law of our own minds: and could we be so stupid as to forget the hand which planted this law in our hearts, yet whilst the law itself lives in us; that is, as long as we continue to have reason and sense, so long shall we feel the obligations we are under in obedience to it; so long shall we be dissatisfied with ourselves for acting contrary to what we see, and know, and feel to be right and becoming.

But join these two considerations together, and you see into

the very source of all the obligations a man can be under to do good to his fellow-creatures. We can consider men only as they stand related to us, or as they and we stand equally related to God, our common father; and under these views we may discover whatever we owe to man for his own sake, or for the sake of God who made him; and discern the whole compass of our duty with respect to the second great branch of it, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'

Let us then proceed to the third thing, viz. the love of ourselves and our own happiness; and consider how far this will and ought to influence our religious obedience.

It is very evident from the common and universal sense of mankind, that the desires of life and happiness are impressions which come from the Author of nature; and consequently that to follow these impressions, and to act in pursuance of them, is according to nature, and agreeable to the will of God, the author of them. It is reasonable for a man to be concerned for his own happiness; and since the will of God can never contradict right reason, it is consonant to the divine will for men to act on this principle, the care of themselves and of their own welfare. This concern for our own happiness is a very strong principle of action in us, and when duly pursued, within its proper bounds, a very justifiable one; and though in strictness of speech it cannot be termed a principle of religion, because the reason of our own religious obedience is not to be resolved into self-love; yet, considering the strict union which God has made between our happiness and our duty, the concern for our own happiness, when duly regulated, will always be a powerful principle of action in matters of religion.

The natural care and concern therefore which all men have for themselves and their own happiness, is the great source from which the motives of religion are deduced; and the reason why this natural principle of action does often furnish very powerful motives to the cause of vice and irreligion, is no other than this; that men often, through the corruption of their affections, judge amiss of their happiness, and pursue those things as pleasant and profitable, which are really pernicious and destructive. In which case men are not to be blamed for pursuing their own happiness, but for the corruption of their hearts, which

makes them place their happiness in the things the most contrary to it. For since God made man to be happy, and has endowed him with reason to discern wherein his true happiness does consist, it must needs be agreeable to the will of God that man should endeavor to attain that happiness for which he was intended. The consequence of which is, that it is no blemish to our obedience, that we are moved by the considerations of that happiness, which God has made to be the reward of it.

To judge rightly therefore of the motives on which men act in their religious concerns, we must judge of the nature of the happiness they propose to themselves; and this, I think, we may admit as a rule in this case; that as long as men seek after that happiness which is natural and proper, and intended for them by God, so long they act on motives agreeable to the will of God.

The happiness in which men are capable of having any share, or for which they have any desires, is either that which belongs to this world, or that which belongs to the world to come. That future rewards are proper incitements to virtue and religion, is plain from hence; that God has proposed them as such, and sent his only and well-beloved Son into the world, to bring 'life and immortality to light through the gospel.' But these future rewards do not alter the nature of religion, or give God a better title to our obedience than he had before: they contain not the reasons and evidences of the obligations we were under to the supreme Creator, but they added as proper movements to the will and affections of men, and to raise their minds above the temptations of this world, which so easily beset them. The particular rewards promised in the gospel being matter of divine revelation, to reject them is want of faith; to admit them is an act of religion towards God, with respect to that faith which is the foundation of our receiving them; but with respect to the influence of the rewards themselves, they do not make any thing to be a religious duty which is not so in itself; they do not make any thing cease to be religion, which was religion before.

As to the happiness of this present life, we can, I think, as

little question whether God intended men to be happy here, as we can, whether he intends them to be happy hereafter: the natural desires of men after this happiness, the necessary connexion between virtue and happiness, and the goodness of God towards his creatures, will not permit us to make any doubt of it; and if God intended men for happiness here, to pursue this happiness by the most justifiable means, that is, by the means of virtue and religion, must needs be agreeable to his holy will; and consequently the prospect of the peace and tranquillity of this life is a proper motive to religion.

Under the old law we find the promises of this life were expressly made to religious obedience by God himself; a demonstration, I think, that the motives of this world are not in their own nature destructive of religious obedience. Long life, temporal peace and prosperity in the florishing condition of their country, fruitful seasons, and plentiful harvests, are inducements always proposed to the Jews to keep the commandments: nor may we pretend to say that these promises were peculiar and only proper to the Jews, unless we think that it was peculiar to the Jews to desire long life, prosperity, and plenty: for motives founded in natural desires must be as extensive as the desires themselves; and having been propounded by God as motives of religion to one nation, it shows they are proper for all. The Jews had indeed an express promise of temporal felicity, if they continued obedient: other nations, if they believe God to be the Governor of the world, must have assurance of the like reward; for to suppose God to govern the world infers his care of a religious obedient people: and therefore our Saviour gives it as an instance of want of faith, where men distrust the goodness of God in providing for them whilst they endeavor to serve him. But farther; even under the gospel we are assured that 'godliness has the promises of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.'

To encourage ourselves therefore in our duty and obedience, with the hopes that God will reward us here with life, health, and prosperity, is no blemish to our religion; but indeed is an act of faith in God as Governor of the world, and a proper inducement to make us, in all we say or do, to look up to him

who is the giver of every good and perfect gift, both in this life and in the next.

Our Saviour reckons but two general heads of religion, the 'love of God,' and the 'love of our neighbor;' but the second of these plainly infers another, the love of ourselves; for since we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, it is evident that we may and ought to love ourselves. A corrupt and irreligious affection can be no rule of duty; and if we are bound to love others according to the measure of the love we have for ourselves, it is evident at least that we may, consistently with the nature of religion, love ourselves as much as we are bound to love others: and since it is our duty to promote the present ease, and happiness, and prosperity of our neighbors, it must be agreeable to the mind of our blessed Saviour that we should take the same care of ourselves; and if this be a lawful care, it must needs be allowed that it is never better employed than when it makes us obedient towards God, in hopes of his favor and protection.

Having now, if not too largely, yet at least as far as the present occasion will give leave, endeavored to clear the first thing proposed, I shall proceed to the second; namely,

How plainly and evidently these principles lead us to works of charity and mercy.

'He that oppresseth the poor,' says the wise King of Israel, 'reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoreth him, hath mercy on the poor.'

The poor are the creatures of God, not only as they are men, but also as they are poor men: the different orders and degrees of men are from the hand of God; and to despise or oppress a man for being what God has thought fit to make him, is to reproach God: and if we have a true honor for God, the common Father of both rich and poor, it will dispose us to regard even the meanest of his children. The rich are the elder brothers of the world; and as they share the estate of it among them, so is it incumbent on them to provide for the necessities of the rest of the family; which they can hardly neglect without renouncing the common relation they have to one and the same parent; so that to show mercy to the poor is a direct way of paying honor to God.

Besides, works of mercy redound to the honor of God through the praises and thanksgivings of those who feel the comfort and relief of them. The charity of the rich, thrown into the lap of the poor, ascends up in more delightful streams than the incense of the altar, and returns again in showers of blessings on the head of the liberal. The unexpected relief which the indigent meet with, naturally creates in them a great sense of Providence; and of the care of God over his creatures; it raises them to a thankful acknowlegement of his regard towards them, and disposes them to a religious dependence on him in the midst of all their distress. So that in this sense also works of charity tend to the honor of God, as they promote a true sense of religion in the world.

That the good and welfare of men are directly consulted by the charitable hand, is too plain a case to admit of any proof; and great pity it is that there is any room to doubt whether this end be always attained by the liberality of well-disposed persons: but so it is, that too great a part of what is given in charity in this rich and populous city, instead of being a supply to the want of saints, is the nourishment of idle and debauched vagabonds: a case the more to be lamented, because the frequent impostures of this kind make good people distrustful of all who ask for charity, and sometimes bring great difficulties on the well-deserving poor. Under these circumstances we can no otherwise answer this end of charity, the doing good to others, than by taking some care to place our charity right; and to distinguish between the truly needy and the idle beggar, who lies in wait to intercept charity, and to divert the maintenance of the more deserving. But however we may be imposed on in this respect, yet in that which follows, I trust there is no fear of being deceived; for though the wicked receiver of charity shall answer for his guile and hypocrisy, yet the liberality of the giver shall not go unrewarded; for,

Thirdly, by works of mercy and charity we make the best provision for our own present and future happiness. This may be concluded by direct inference from what has been already said; for since works of mercy have so plain a tendency to promote the honor of God, we cannot doubt but that God will reward the love and obedience of such as take pleasure therein.

Add to this, the express promises of the gospel made to these good works especially; insomuch that clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, visiting the sick and the prisoners in their distress, are mentioned by our blessed Saviour as chief articles of inquiry at the last great day, and are put into the short description which St. James has left us of 'pure and undefiled religion in the sight of God:' add to this, I say, and we have all the security that can be desired or expected.

The final retribution for this and every other work must be expected from the justice of God, in that day in which he hath appointed to judge the world; but this hinders not but that we may justly hope for part of our reward in this life. In the chapter of the text, the apostle encourages the Corinthians to liberality, by teaching them to expect a return for it from God, in the increase of their stores, and a plentiful harvest of the good fruits of the earth: this reward he earnestly prays they may have: 'He that ministereth seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown.' The apostle wrote to Christians, and doubtless he made use of none but Christian motives; and on his authority we may venture to promise to the charitable Christian a suitable reward, as well in the blessings of this life, as of that which is to come. But it is time to proceed to the last thing proposed:

To show how effectually these considerations conspire to recommend to us that good work, for promoting of which we are this day met together in the fear of God.

If to supply the temporal wants of the brethren be a work redounding to the honor of God; behold these numerous objects before you, all wearing the livery of charity, not as a badge of servitude to any earthly master, but as a token that they and their benefactors are equally servants to God: nor are their present wants and necessities the only concern of this pious institution; but a foundation is laid for the constant support of them and their families, by training them up, and disposing of them to such useful employments as may yield them a comfortable maintenance for their lives; so that this charity, like the widow's cruise, will always recruit itself; and bread

to be earned by these many hands, in time to come, shall be placed to the liberal man's account, as the growth and product of his beneficence, and be a memorial of his good works daily renewed and offered up in the sight of God.

But the supplying the temporal wants of the poor is not the only nor the chief end of these institutions: they have another view, which more directly regards the honor and glory of God; the instructing of youth in the principles of virtue and religion, and teaching them to know God betimes, and the obedience owing to him. And if providing for the temporal wants of the poor shall be esteemed an honor paid to God, how much more shall this charity be so esteemed, which is dedicated expressly to that end? the chief business of which is, to fill the mouths of babes and sucklings with the praises of God, a sacrifice which he will not despise. To instruct undisciplined youth in the principles of faith and obedience, what is it but to extend the dominion of God over his creatures; to 'turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,' and to 'make ready a people prepared for the Lord;' to conquer the powers of darkness, like good soldiers of Christ; and to lay up in store for ourselves more than the conqueror's crown? But, secondly,

The argument has the same advantage with respect to the good of those who are the immediate objects of this charity: it has this in common with other charities, that it is a supply for the wants of the poor; it has this above many others, that it is a provision against future wants; but its chief glory is, that it is a provision not only for the present comforts of this life, but also for the happiness of that life which is eternal; by rescuing the poor from that contagion of vice to which they are so fatally exposed for want of due instructions in their youth: it is this want which has filled the streets with idle vagabonds and beggars; many of whom know nothing of 'the Lord who bought them' except only his name; nor had they known that, but merely for the use of it in the common forms of begging. Lastly,

As to yourselves, the encouragers, the supporters of this good work, God is your reward; and as the charity you are engaged in has all the marks of a just regard to the honor of God, and

of a tender and Christian concern for the present and future happiness of your brethren; so need you not doubt but that the promises of the gospel shall be justified unto you, both in this life and in that which is to come. Go on therefore, and faint not: if your work be attended with difficulties, they shall serve only to increase your reward. Let it be the care on your part, 'that your good be not evil spoken of;' and if offences come, (and they must needs come,) 'wo to them by whom they come.'

But that this charity may in all respects be above reproach, and answer the ends proposed by the liberal benefactors, I earnestly recommend it to those who have the immediate care of these children, to be watchful over their behavior, and constant and diligent in the discharge of their own duty. The success of this charity depends in great measure on their fidelity: men of fortune and business in the world cannot attend so closely as to observe every thing that passes; this care therefore must rest on those who have more immediately the inspection of these schools. And let them remember that they receive the pay of charity; and that they cannot neglect their duty without adding this aggravation to their crime, the abuse of one of the noblest charities of this age.

And now, may that God, whose honor you are laboring to promote, whose children these are, who are supported and instructed by your charity, prosper this work in your hands, and raise up fresh supplies for the administration of this service! May he minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness! 'To him,' &c.

SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE XIV.

JUDGES, CHAP. II.—VERSE 7.

THUS far all was well; but the case quickly altered: no sooner were the men who had seen the works of the Lord *gathered unto their fathers*, but *there arose another generation after them which knew not the Lord*, &c. The effects of their departing from God their deliverer, are described at the 14th verse.

This is the case of the Israelites. Would that it was a singular one, and that the rest of the people of God stood clear from the like imputation! It is but a melancholy reflexion to think that the misbehavior here charged on the people of Israel, is almost a natural effect of the present degenerate and corrupt state of nature: this pointed out in the common affairs of life: but public blessings make still less impression on the minds of men: this point enlarged on.

The mischief which such a temper of ingratitude produces in private and in public concerns, is very manifest; but its effect in the affairs of this life, and among ourselves, is a light matter compared with its influence with regard to religious duties.

The common blessings of Providence are received and enjoyed by multitudes who seldom or never think of the hand that supplies their wants: the constant and regular supply of our necessities makes us imagine that we have a right to it by prescription, and have a property in it as children of the earth; or that if any thing be owing to wisdom, it is to our own, in managing

the ground and seasons to the best advantage: thus forgetting the Author of every good gift, and transferring to ourselves the honor which is due to him, we do, in the language of the prophet, *sacrifice unto our net, and burn incense to our drag*, &c. Hab. i. 16.

But however these common blessings, which come to all without distinction, are neglected and overlooked, one would imagine that signal deliverances would be had in perpetual remembrance, and transmitted with gratitude and reverence to posterity: yet the case is far otherwise. The history of the Jews, a people under the peculiar and visible government of Providence, is a series of rebellions and revolts against God, who had so often and so miraculously delivered them from the hands of their enemies. In their story the counsels of God with respect to them and to their neighbors are laid open: from their example we may learn to reckon with ourselves, and to know what to fear and what to hope from the justice and mercy of God: for the ways of Providence are unalterable, and the same wisdom and justice that governed the Jews, governs all the people of the world: this topic enlarged on. Examples drawn from different nations.

Final punishments, whereby nations are rooted out, are of use to us as warnings to flee from the wrath to come; otherwise they can do us no service: for should we ever fall into so wretched a condition, who can deliver us from the hand of the living God? But other judgments, how sharp soever they may be, are the effects of mercy, and intended for our correction: moreover the perverseness and corruption of men's hearts justify the goodness and equity of God in the infliction of such punishments; and they must blame themselves for not attending to the gentler calls of Providence.

Perhaps there may be no great occasion here to justify the ways of God towards the children of Israel; all are of one opi-

nion, to condemn their perverseness and ingratitude. But are we ourselves innocent from this great offence?

Let us consider our own case; and we have great reason to consider it, now the enemies of our religion and liberty appear with triumph in the land. The unhappy divisions in civil matters are passed over; for our conduct towards God and his holy religion is the first and most interesting consideration.

The special providence of God over the people of Israel was not the effect of partiality, or a weak fondness for a particular set of men; but the house of Abraham was called for the sake of true religion; to preserve a knowlege of God in the world, &c.; and as they were chosen for these great purposes, so whenever they acted contrary to them, they ceased to be the chosen people, and were treated as enemies and rebels.

We are apt enough to boast of the purity of our reformed religion, and to flatter ourselves that we also are a peculiar people of God. And if we judge from our many deliverances, we have reason to acknowlege the care and protection of Heaven over us. But let us remember still that we too are chosen to profess and maintain the truth of God's holy gospel, and to bear our testimony against the corruptions which have prevailed over great part of the Christian world. If, instead of acting up to this, we grow careless and indifferent to our holy profession, we forfeit our title to God's protection, and must expect to be treated as enemies.

Our present condition is attended with fears and apprehensions; and if we look back and consider from whence we are fallen, we may see but too much reason to suspect that they are well founded. How has this nation been blessed with the light of the gospel! How wonderfully and how often has it been rescued from danger, when to human appearance there was no help at hand! History of its successes, dangers, and deliverances, from the Reformation to the Restoration. At

that time the hearts of the people were turned as the heart of one man: nor was it in vain they sought the Lord; for by a wonderful series of providential mercies he delivered them; and we have seen for many years the crown on the head of protestant princes, the natural guardians of the religion and liberties of this country.

If we have made a right use of this last deliverance, let us fear no change; for God will not forsake us till we forsake him. But the prospect before us, the dangers that draw near to us, call on us to act uprightly with ourselves, and not deceive our hearts by supposing that God will remember us, if we have forgotten him and his mercies.

Our histories will always remind us of our great deliverances, and we cannot forget them; nor did the Jews forget the wonders wrought in Egypt, and the redemption of their ancestors from captivity: but the charge against them is the same as that brought by St. Paul against the Gentiles; *when they knew God, they glorified him not as God,* &c. Do we stand clear of this charge? Let every man recollect what he has heard, read, and seen, within the compass of a few years. State of the nation commented on: its infidelity and profaneness; its neglect and violation of the Sabbath; its proneness to theft and robbery; its hatred of popery shown to be not so much a concern for the purity of the gospel, as fear of the powers of a popish church. In the mean time popery itself has been gaining ground in many places by the artful and unregarded insinuations of the adversary, and by applications of another kind, which do but little honor to the converts or converters; since the price at which a man may sell his faith is become almost a known sum.

We have but too exactly copied the Jews in their days of prosperity: let us learn of them likewise in their adversity, and cry unto God for help against our enemies.

And as in all the dispensations of Providence it is expected

that we should make use of the means which God puts into our power for our own defence and safety, let us on this occasion, with cheerfulness, and with the hearts of men who trust in God, be ready to employ our persons and fortunes in defence of our king and country, and of the happy constitution in church and state under which we live. Conclusion.

DISCOURSE XIV.

Preached October 6, 1745, on occasion of the Rebellion in Scotland.

JUDGES, CHAP. II.—VERSE 7.

And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord that he did for Israel.

THUS far all is well: God had been extremely gracious and merciful to Israel; and those who had seen his wonders, and had felt the miseries from which he had delivered them, retained a grateful remembrance of his goodness. But the case quickly altered; no sooner were the men who had seen the works of the Lord, 'gathered unto their fathers,' but 'there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel: and the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.' The effects of their departing from God their deliverer are described at the 14th verse. 'And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of the spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.'

You have now the case of the Israelites fully before you. I wish it was a singular case, and that the rest of the people of God stood clear from the like imputation. If they do, happy are they; if they do not, they have great reason to fear that the same cause will produce the same effect, and that they likewise shall be sold into the hands of their enemies.

It is but a melancholy reflection to think that the misbehavior here charged on the people of Israel is almost a natural effect of the present degenerate and corrupted state of nature: we receive benefits with great warmth and zeal of gratitude, and we possess and enjoy them with great coldness and indifference, and too often with a total forgetfulness of the hand that bestowed them. This temper discovers itself in the common affairs of life, and the mutual intercourse that men have with men. Those who are able to help us, are courted and caressed as long as we want their assistance; are honored and reverenced whilst they afford it; and as soon as they have made us happy, we begin to think they did us but justice, they gave us only what we had a right to; and the acknowlegements due to the benefactor are paid to our own merit and desert. By these steps our success in the world, owing perhaps intirely to the partiality our friends had for us, and which ought to make us humble and thankful, leads us to two odious vices very incident to human nature, though very unbecoming the condition of it, pride and ingratitude.

Public blessings make still less impression on the minds of men than private benefactions. Very few think of any obligation lying on themselves for the good they enjoy in common with their neighbors. The peace and quiet security procured by the care and protection of government, is rarely reflected on as creating any debt of gratitude to those who watch for us. When tribute is demanded by those to whom tribute is due, men are apt to consider what they pay as so much lost out of their property; whereas in truth no part of our fortune makes a better return to us than that which is bestowed to secure the whole, and to maintain peace and tranquillity in our days.

What mischief this temper of ingratitude produces in private and in public life, is but too manifest. Every man almost has his complaint against somebody, who has repaid his good offices with neglect and contempt, perhaps too with injuries; and in public life one would imagine that liberty was mistaken for a right to abuse the government; and that the dignity of a free state consisted in acting without regard or reverence to those who are at the head of it.

But the effects of this perverse disposition acting in the

affairs of this life, and among ourselves, are matters of light complaint compared with its influence in matters of religion. We have all one great Friend, if we would acknowlege him; one great Governor, if we would regard him. But we are too apt to deal with God as we do with the rest of our friends; we intreat, we beg for his assistance, when we are in distress; and when we are relieved, we think but little of him.

The common blessings of Providence are received and enjoyed by multitudes, who seldom or never think of the hand that supplies their wants. The former and the latter rain, and the plentiful seasons, are ascribed to I know not what course of natural causes; but such causes are meant, to which no thanks are due: and this notion, contrary to reason and true philosophy, is the more readily embraced, because it furnishes men with the good things of the world, and lays them under no obligations to the Author of them. St. Paul says that God at no time 'left himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' But how has this evidence been attended to? The constant and regular supply of our necessities makes us imagine that we have a right to them by prescription, and that we have a property in them as children of the earth; or that if any thing is owing to wisdom, it is to our own wisdom in managing the ground and the seasons to the best advantage. And thus forgetting the Author of every good gift, and transferring the honor due to him to ourselves, we do, in the language of the prophet, 'sacrifice unto our net, and burn incense to our drag, because by them our portion is fat, and our meat plenteous:' Hab. i. 16.

But however these common blessings, which come to all without distinction, are neglected and overlooked, one would imagine that signal deliverances wrought in favor of any people, and in which the arm of the Lord is made bare and visible to every eye, should be had in perpetual remembrance, and be transmitted with sentiments of gratitude, honor, and religion to the latest posterity.

But the case is far otherwise!

The history of the Jews, a people under the peculiar and visible government of Providence, is a series of rebellions and

revolts against God, who had frequently and miraculously delivered them from the hands of their enemies. In their story the counsels of God with respect to them and their neighbors are laid open; and we see plainly the resentment of God's justice against a rebellious people, and in what manner he raised the nations round about them to punish and distress them. From their example we may learn to reckon with ourselves; and by considering our own case, know what to fear and what to hope from the justice and mercy of God: for the ways of Providence are unalterable, and the same wisdom and justice which governed the Jews, governs all the people of the world. The purposes of God are the same towards all nations, though not so discernible and manifest as in the history of the people of Israel. Profane history presents us many instances of nations subdued under the hand of their enemies, and fallen from a state of pride and sovereignty to the miserable condition of slavery and captivity. There the history leaves us. It acquaints us with the facts, and the politicians of the world are busied in assigning causes for the surprising changes that have been in the nations. Some discern great wisdom and conduct on the side of the conquerors, and great mistakes and ill management on the side of the unfortunate; and all agree to ascribe, in most cases, the events and successes of war to the number and bravery of the troops. But look into the sacred history, where the counsels of God are displayed by his holy Prophets: there will you see a plain reason why the favorite nation, delivered most wonderfully and miraculously from the slavery of Egypt, was sold again into slavery to the Philistines and other heathen nations around them. Had this story been told in the common way of history, we should have thought this people extremely weak or unfortunate, in that they had no sooner escaped out of the hands of the great and powerful kings of Egypt, but they became vassals and bondsmen to the little princes bordering on Canaan. But see the truth of the case: they became extremely unfortunate, because they were extremely wicked; their prosperity was their ruin, as it made them forget the Lord that bought them. And the strength, which they relied on as their security, betrayed them to their destruction; for they had to deal with him, 'who saveth not

kings by the multitude of an host, nor giveth the battle to the strong.'

Let no man be so weak as to imagine that this method of Providence was peculiar and confined to the Jews, and that other nations were left to follow their own imaginations, and that God regarded them not; for the contrary appears in the same sacred history in which we have the account of the Jewish nation. The counsels of God were not indeed so manifestly declared to other nations by prophets and messengers from God; but the methods of justice were the same to all, and the nations were left to reason and conscience, those great lights given to all alike, to interpret the conduct of Providence with respect to themselves. Were Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed by chance? No: it was by a fire from heaven, commissioned to extirpate a wicked and profane people. Were the Canaanites overpowered by the arms of Israel? Certainly not: but God, who had waited in patience and forbearance till the measure of their iniquity was full, delivered them up to destruction. Inquire what became of the great monarchies of Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt: you may see their doom foretold by the prophets. They were to be destroyed for their great idolatry and corruption; and the prophecies have been so remarkably fulfilled, that they are a standing lesson of instruction to all nations who have eyes to see and hearts to understand. Thus too it fared at last with the favorite people of the Jews; they were often punished in mercy, and suffered to be miserable, that they might become better. They were from time to time admonished by the prophets; and at last God sent his Son to them; him they slew and hanged on a tree; and having filled up the measure of their iniquity, vengeance pursued them; and such vengeance as astonished the world, and does yet astonish it; for 'there is no misery like their misery.'

Final punishments, whereby nations are intirely rooted out, are of use to us as examples and warnings to flee from the wrath to come; otherwise they can do us no service: for should we ever fall into so wretched a condition as to call down such judgments on our head, who can deliver us from the hand of the living God? But other judgments, how sharp and severe soever they may be, are the effects of mercy, and intended for our cor-

rection. When ancient and late deliverances are forgotten, and have no effect on the mind; when the voice of God speaking in his law, by his prophets, and by the ministers of his word, is no longer attended to; nothing remains but to apply sharper remedies, or to permit the people to fill up the full measure of their iniquities, and to perish in their sins. It is mercy to prevent this fatal evil, how corroding soever the means made use of by mercy may prove. The perverseness and corruption of men's hearts justify the goodness and equity of God in inflicting such punishments, and they must blame themselves for not attending to the gentler and the kinder calls of Providence.

Perhaps there may be no great occasion to justify before you the ways of God towards the children of Israel; we are all of one opinion to condemn their perverseness and ingratitude: so much easier is it to detect the faults of others, than to see and acknowlege our own!

But are we innocent from this great offence?

Let us consider our own case: and surely we have great reason to consider it, now the enemies of our religion and liberty appear with triumph in our land, and are in possession of one ancient and powerful kingdom united to the crown of England.

Our unhappy divisions in civil matters I choose to pass over in silence at this time and place; for I mean no reproach to any man. And without doubt our conduct towards God, and our regard to his holy religion, is the first and most interesting consideration now before us.

It is well known that the people of Israel were the chosen, the peculiar people of God, and distinguished from the rest of the nations by a special Providence directing them and their affairs. If you consider this as the effect of partiality, and a weak fondness for one set of men more than another, you injure the attributes of God, who acts by wisdom and justice in all his dealings, and is no respecter of persons. The house of Abraham was called for the sake of true religion; to preserve the knowlege of the one God among themselves, to propagate it among the nations, and to prepare the way for introducing into the world, under proper circumstances, that seed in which all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. As they were

hosen for these great purposes, so whenever they acted con-
rary to them, they ceased to be the chosen people, and were
reated as enemies and rebels.

We are apt enough to boast of the purity of our religion, and
ur reformation from the errors and corruptions of the church of
Rome; and to flatter ourselves that we also are a peculiar people
f God, and set up by Providence to be the bulwark of the
rotestant religion. And indeed, if we judge from the many de-
iverances we have had when our religion and our liberties were
n utmost danger, we have great reason to acknowlege the care
nd protection of Heaven over us. But remember still that
ve too are chosen to profess and maintain the truth of God's
oly gospel, and to bear our testimony against the corruptions
vhich have prevailed over a great part of the Christian world.
f, instead of acting up to this part assigned us by Providence,
ve grow careless and indifferent to our holy profession, and
uffer a spirit of irreligion to prevail over the nation, we for-
eit our title to God's protection; we are no longer the chosen
people, and must expect to be treated as enemies and de-
erters.

Our present situation is attended with fears and uneasy ap-
prehensions; and if we look back and consider from whence we
re fallen, we may see but too much reason to suspect that our
ears are well grounded. How has this nation been blessed
vith the light of the gospel! How wonderfully and how often
as it been rescued from danger, when to human appearance
here was no help at hand! Scarcely had the Reformation
aken root among us, but a popish queen, made cruel by bigotry
nd superstition, ascended the throne, and applied the only strong
rgument of popery, fire and fagot, to extinguish the light that
vas breaking in on us. Not only the civil powers of this country
vere in the hands that meant to destroy the Reformation, but
hey were supported and united to the powers of Spain, whose
rince was become a partner of the throne of England; who
ived to destroy (not in this country, blessed be God! but in his
own dominions) thousands and tens of thousands on account of
eligion. Such were the powers under which the Reformation
ere, still in its infancy, was to struggle. It is painful to think
f the miseries of that time; but think of them we ought, and

bless God for the noble examples of constancy and Christian courage, left by those whom he raised up to bear testimony, at the expense of their lives, to the truth of his religion. Had this reign been long and prosperous, it is highly probable that Philip of Spain had left this country in the same condition he left his own; where the Inquisition rules with lordly and uncontrollable power over the consciences and over the fortunes of the people. But God, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, made way for a protestant princess to ascend the throne; in whose long and glorious reign the Reformation took deep root, and the establishment of this national church was perfected: a work of great wisdom and piety, and so esteemed by the protestant churches abroad, however unhappily some among ourselves have forsaken her communion.

The reign of this glorious princess was almost a continual scene of deliverances from foreign invasions and disturbances at home. And notwithstanding she was distressed on every side, by bulls and curses from Rome, by armadas from Spain, by rebellions in England and Ireland, she left this church and nation in peace and security: so wonderfully did the hand of God appear in our preservation.

Peace and security under a weak government which succeeded, produced by degrees a corruption in principles and manners, which ended at last in the ruin of this church and nation, and the destruction of a virtuous prince, worthy of a far better fate. With him fell all our hopes of order and government in church and state; anarchy and confusion usurped the throne; and religion was so divided into an almost infinite number of disagreeing sects, that the true one could hardly be found in the crowd.

But whilst we are under this thick cloud, He, who can bring light out of darkness, did, against all the hopes of human probability, restore us to our happy constitution in church and state: not by force of arms, or the power of princes, but by overruling the passions of men; so that even they became instruments in restoring these blessings, who had been greatly concerned in destroying them.

It will be wronging the nation to say that this deliverance at the Restoration was not received with great joy and plea-

sure. The joy indeed was excessive; and as the case too often happens, left little room for sober and serious reflexions. The hearts of men being set open to the impressions and transports of joy, soon grew sensual; and the prosperity of the nation broke out into luxury, and into all the vices which naturally attend it. The senses of religion decayed; and the very appearances of it were suspected, as a remnant of the hypocrisy with which the late times had been charged. And if we may judge by the performances of the stage, which are formed to the taste of the people, there never was a time when lewdness, irreligion, and profaneness, were heard with more patience.

But let us consider what fruit the nation had of these things. I shall pass over all the calamities of that time, which were many, and mention only that which is the cause and foundation of all we fear at present. In the next reign then, see popery once more exalted to the throne of England, and working to destroy the religion and liberties of the people; not by art and cunning, and leisurely steps, but by open and avowed attempts on our constitution. The laws for defence of our religion were silenced by a dispensing power; papists were placed on the bench, on the seat of judgment, and at the head of colleges in our universities. Men's hearts sank for fear, and the torrent seemed to carry all before it. One happy effect indeed it had; it awakened men to a sober sense of themselves and their condition. When they were put in fear, they soon found themselves to be but men; and they did the only reasonable thing they could do, apply to God for protection. The zeal of the nation at that time, for the pure uncorrupted doctrines of the gospel, in opposition to the errors of popery, was perhaps greater than ever it had been from the days of the Reformation. The pastors and their flocks were equally animated with a constancy and a courage above temptation. And the clergy of the established church, under all the fears and apprehensions that daily threatened them, maintained the doctrines of the Reformation with such learning, ability, and integrity, as did them honor both at home and abroad.

Thus were the hearts of the people turned as the heart of one man: nor was it in vain they sought the Lord; for by a wonderful series of providence he delivered them from their

distress. And we have seen for many years the crown on the head of protestant princes, the natural guardians of the religion and liberties of this country.

If we have made right use of this last deliverance, let us fear no change; for God will not forsake us till we forsake him. But the prospect before us, the danger that draws near to us, call on us to act uprightly with ourselves; and not to deceive our hearts with hopes that God will remember us, if we have forgot him and the great things he has done for us.

Our histories will always remind us of the great deliverances this nation has had, and we cannot forget them; nor did the Jews forget the wonders wrought in the land of Egypt, and the redemption of their ancestors from captivity. The historical remembrance of the facts they had; and we have it. The charge against the Jews expressed frequently by their forgetting God, is the same which St. Paul brings against the heathen world: 'When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations; and their foolish heart was darkened.'

Do we stand clear of this charge? I wish to God we did.

Let not *me* be the accuser of my nation, but let every man recollect what he has heard, and read, and seen, within the compass of a few years. Surely the gospel of Christ Jesus was never treated with greater malice and contempt, by Jews or Heathens, than it has been in this Christian country. Think not that I am condemning a sober inquiry into the truth of religion: God forbid. But what shall we say, for the undisguised profaneness, and even blasphemy, that has swarmed from the press! Many instances might be given; but one can never be forgotten; where the noblest and most exalted hymn of Christian devotion known to this church, or any church in the world, in which angels and the blessed spirits above join with us, has been perverted to the highest impiety and blasphemy that ever the wickedness or malice of man's heart could conceive. This and other crimes of the same nature are indeed chargeable on the authors: but how deplorable must the state of a nation be, when men find encouragement to provide such entertainment for the public!

Look into common life, not to pry into the secret faults of

ien, but to see what is become of that sense of religion which nce animated the people. When popery was breaking in on s, our churches were crowded; and unhappy was the man ho by sickness or any real necessity was prevented in his ttendance in the house of the Lord. Is it so now? Is not Sun- ay become a day of diversion to the great ones, and a day f idleness and laziness to the little ones? And has not this een manifestly followed by a great increase of great wicked- ess and violence among the lower people? Theft and rob- ery, which used to be secret crimes, now appear armed in ir streets; and are supported by numbers strong enough to efy the power of the magistrate. The unruly passions of en must be governed either by force or by religion. Force nnot watch at all doors to prevent farther mischief; but reli- on is a centinel placed in every heart, to guard it against ickedness; and it is but a natural consequence for men to ow violent and injurious to others, in proportion as their nse of religion decays.

But amidst this ruin of virtue and religion, one thing there that still may be thought matter of comfort; that the tion is generally averse to popery: but it is some abate- ent even to this comfort, to consider that the fear of popery not always a concern for the purity of the gospel, but a fear erely of the powers of a popish church. Those who have e least religion, and are grown wild with notions of liberty, ve reason to be apprehensive of ecclesiastical courts and quisitions under the direction of popery. But in this there is virtue or merit; though it may be perhaps a happy circum- nce at present, that there is something in popery for those be afraid of who have no regard for religion.

But in the mean time has not popery been daily getting ound on us by the artful and unregarded insinuations of the versary, and by applications of another kind, which do in- ed but little honor to the converts or the converters? The ce at which a man may sell the protestant religion is be- me almost a stated and well known sum; and there are own markets in which a man may sell the faith in which he was rn and bred. Such new purchased proselytes make no great ure; for this method indeed has no effect but on the lowest

people. And considering how improper an application this to the conscience, there is ground to suspect that it is made us of rather to raise recruits against a proper time than in hope to make real converts. I wish they may not soon feel th effects of this management so long connived at.

But to return to ourselves: to prevent this, and whatev else we may apprehend from the danger and displeasure c God, let us seek the Lord in our distress; and by acknowleg ing our own unworthiness, and the abuse of former mercies render ourselves objects of his goodness and forgiveness. W have but too exactly copied the behavior of the Jews in thei days of prosperity; let us learn of them likewise in their adver sity, and cry unto God for help against our enemies. Let u set a due value on the blessings bestowed on us, and wall worthy of the light of the gospel which has shone among us that our conduct and behavior may bear testimony to the truth which we profess.

And as in all the dispensations of Providence towards us, i is expected from us that we should make use of the mean which God hath put in our power for our own defence and safety, let us on this occasion with cheerfulness, and the hearts of men who trust in God, be ready to employ our persons and our fortunes in the defence of our king and country, and the happy constitution in church and state under which we live. Let every man do his part: he who can do least can pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Every man may reform one, that is, himself, and fill up perhaps that number of the righteous, for the sake of which the city may be saved.

In a word, the time calls on us to be serious; to think of God and of ourselves; and according to the advice of the psalmist, with which I shall dismiss you, 'to stand in awe and sin not, to commune with our own heart, and in our chamber, and be still; to offer the sacrifice of righteousness, and to put our trust in the Lord.'

END OF VOL. III.

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